

LETTERS FROM THE
MARCHIONESS DE SEVIGNE



The Marchioness de Sévigné
From a contemporary miniature
hitherto unpublished.

LETTERS
FROM THE
Marchioness de Sevigne

TO HER DAUGHTER
THE COUNTESS DE GRIGNAN

WITH INTRODUCTORY ESSAY BY
MADAME DUCLAUX

(A. MARY F. ROBINSON)

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She strikes each point with native force of mind,
While puzzled learning blunders far behind.
Graceful to sight, and elegant to thought,
The great are vanquish'd, and the wise are taught.
Her breeding finish'd, and her temper sweet;
When serious, easy; and when gay, discreet;
In glitt'ring scenes o'er her own heart severe,
In crowds collected, and in courts sincere.

YOUNG.

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MADAME DE SEVIGNE AND HER CIRCLE

By MADAME MARY DUCLAUX

ALTHOUGH she never wrote a book, and would have stared to see herself in print, Madame de Sévigné is one of the classic writers of France. She is also one of those figures in which a nation loves to recognize something of its own image, honouring such persons more for what they were than for what they did. Should you ask me to name a great English book possessing for us the peculiar prestige that the Sévigné Letters enjoy across the Channel, I think that Boswell's *Life of Johnson* would have my vote ; for we appreciate the Doctor (as France the "divine Marquise") not only for his literary talent, but for a ripe wisdom, a sense of realities, and also for a character which might stand for that of a worthy (despite the freak of genius gilding it with a ray not often seen in connexion with qualities so solid), while he and she alike have left their compatriots a treasure of pithy remarks, that every one knows by heart, in which good sense, experience, and wit

combine to form a sort of philosophy of life. We might push the point still further and observe how they both—free and friendly beings that they are !—people our remembrance less with their works than with the faces of their friends, so that the reader of Boswell or Sévigné does not feel that he has mastered a book but that he has been admitted into a certain charmed circle which not to frequent is to proclaim oneself an outsider. For where is the use of editing Dr. Donne or annotating *l'Astrée*, or accumulating still more recondite information, if you know nothing of Johnson, nothing of Sévigné ? Those devious byways will take you but very slowly where their broad highroad carries you at once—to the very key of the position, the heart of a great literature.

It is a rare piece of good fortune to have discovered this charming old translation of the Letters. From the point of view of the scholar, it is valueless: Monmerqué's edition, and especially Monmerqué revised by Mesnard, still keeps complete possession of the field. But, for an English reader, it is an immense advantage to hear the Marquise's voice speaking the elegant language of eighteenth-century Dublin. It is difficult to translate her prose exactly into English: as an Irishwoman she appeals to us at once. Her exuberance, her sly sallies, her political enthusiasms, and that hint of extravagance which often accompanies her wisdom, are explained.

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As an Englishwoman we might sometimes think her rhetorical and inclined to sacrifice a good deal to the prosperity of a jest. That suspicion, that ghost, of a brogue dissipates any misunderstanding on our part.

Wit as she was—lively, large, and liberal lady—it was not for nothing that Madame de Sévigné was the granddaughter of a Saint, of a real Saint, whose canonized surname has become the Christian name of numerous little French girls—in fact, of that Saint Chantal who left her children and her home (stepping relentlessly across the prone body of a young protesting son stretched on the threshold) in order to help St. François de Sales by founding the Order of the Visitation. Whatever Saint Chantal may have lacked in the quality of maternal affection, her granddaughter redeemed it, for the Marquise de Sévigné remains the very pattern of adoring mothers. Her own early life knew nothing of that initial blessing which reconciles most of us to our human condition : she was an orphan. Her father was that forsaken boy whose obstinate grief had not melted the heart of a mother whose conversation was in Heaven. He died young, in 1627, fighting the English at the Isle de Ré, falling victorious, but with twenty-seven lance wounds in his body.

Celse-Bénigne de Rabutin-Chantal (such was his name) left a young widow and a daughter one year

old, the future Madame de Sévigné. They lived in Paris, in one of those tall red houses of the Place Royale which in those days were still the haunt of fashion. Madame de Rabutin-Chantal soon faded out of life. Her young husband had been the gayest, the most brilliant, the bravest of French nobles ; life was too dull without him. Before the little girl was two years old she was motherless as well as fatherless. She could not continue to live alone in her great red house. Sainly grandmother, far from Paris, and saintly great-uncle, Archbishop of Bourges, put their wise heads together and probably offered a convent. But fortunately her mother's people lived near at hand, were hospitable, kind, and welcoming ; so Marie de Rabutin went to live with her grandfather, M. de la Tour de Coulanges, in a comfortable roomy mansion at Sucy-en-Brie in the suburbs of Paris. (It still exists, and we can trace across the neighbouring fields the remnant of its ruined avenues.) The melancholy old place it looks to-day was then a cheerful, salubrious abode which sheltered, besides M. de Coulanges, his married son, Philippe, with his wife and children, and was also constantly visited by several other sons and a daughter, the Marquise de la Trousse.

To our modern ears all these names, these titles, seem much of a muchness ; but I must warn you that there is a whole world of difference between a

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Rabutin and a Coulanges. The Rabutins were part and parcel of old feudal France, with royal blood in their veins (or they chose to think so), intensely independent, born soldiers — or born saints. The Coulanges were mere *noblesse de robe*, magistrates, diplomatists, functionaries of the State : persons in every respect modern and practical. No uncomfortable π complicated their equations : one cannot imagine a Madame de Coulanges striding across her child's prone body in order to go out into the wilderness and found a Sisterhood. As a fact, Madame Philippe de Coulanges was a second mother to the orphan entrusted to her charge. She had several children of her own—two little girls and a son, the youngest, who was still in his cradle (for it was in 1633) when his seven-year-old cousin danced into the room like a sunbeam and felled him with a sort of dazzled joy and infantile merriment which infected all his life. The “petit de Coulanges” lived long, yet never lived to grow up ; he was the spoiled child of his age, no more serious, to all appearance, than a pet canary, and yet after all a philosopher at heart. He and Madame de Sévigné will be playfellows till the end of their days, as it was in the beginning. He will answer her incomparable letters with delicious puerile epistles continually dropping into poetry like a—like a cock-robin (for Emmanuel de Coulanges had a celebrity of his own ; he was “Le

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Chansonnier"). He cannot be serious, he complains, he cannot shake off the "Old Adam."

"Je voudrais du vieil homme

Être séparé :

Le morceau de pomme

N'est pas digéré."

Yet he was to have his sorrows ; his wife could not take him seriously, and dangled too constantly at her pretty heels Coulanges' disagreeable first cousin, de la Trousse. Fortunately, Madame de Sévigné was ever ready to console distress.

"Le moyen que vous ne m'aimiez pas," she will write to him one day (sixty years after that first encounter in the cradle). "C'est la première chose que vous avez faite quand vous avez commencé d'ouvrir les yeux ; et c'est moi qui ai commencé la mode de vous aimer et de vous trouver aimable ; une amitié si bien conditionnée ne craint point les injures du temps."

"When you do not answer my letters, I never scold, I never sulk. I say : my cousin must be away from home ; he is absent in one of his enchanted palaces ; some one has absconded with my unfortunate cousin ! And I await in patience the return of your remembrance, will never doubt as to the reality of your affection." (26 April 1695.)

"Never were young creatures so merry as were we !" (10 July 1691.)

Often, and especially in her latter days, does

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Madame de Sévigné delight in recalling those pleasant days of childhood. The orphan's early years had been abundantly protected by no less than four uncles : besides Emmanuel's father, there was the jolly Charles de Coulanges, Seigneur de Saint-Aubin, fond of books and fond of games, who in later days was to distress his family by an unsuitable marriage, and finally to die like a saint, leaving his "petite Camuson," his humble but dutiful wife, to the care of Madame de Sévigné, the kindest heart he knew ; there was Louis de Coulanges, Seigneur de Chezières, a distinguished diplomat, punctual and precise ; there was especially the Abbé de Coulanges, the "Bien-Bon," Madame de Sévigné's own particular uncle, or rather her adopted father. On the death of old M. de la Tour de Coulanges in 1636, the Abbé was appointed guardian to his orphan niece ; henceforth she belonged to him, and spent much of her girlhood with him at his Priory of Livry. Never was she happier than there, with the forest of Bondy all round her for her walks ; and yet she enjoyed her visits to Sucy or to her aunt, Madame de la Trousse, who showed her the splendours of Paris and initiated her into the polite science of the Court, while permitting her to share the Latin lessons, the readings in French and in Italian literature, which that sublime poet and Academician, M. Chapelain,

deigned to bestow on the youthful Marquis de la Trousse.

These cousins, de la Trousse, figure constantly in Madame de Sévigné's letters. There are four of them : the young Marquis, whom we shall meet in her pages as a soldier of merit, obstinate in love and war, but egotistical, self-centred ; and three girls, one of whom, Madame de Sanzei, was destined to early widowhood and premature deafness. Her sisters were never to marry ; the younger of them, Mademoiselle de Méri, is a frequent figure in the Marquise's correspondence : an oddity, if ever there were ; with her exasperating unreasonableness, her whims, her caprices, her vapours, and her huffiness, she will drive half out of his mind the exact and punctual Abbé de Coulanges, yet merit her cousin's affection and respect by the deep and tender warmth of her kind, fanciful heart. I have always imagined a family likeness between Mademoiselle de Méri and the enigmatic Madame de Grignan, whom she adored. But my fancy carries me on too fast ! . . . Among all these cousins Marie de Rabutin-Chantal grew out of childhood and blossomed into beauty. We read in the Memoirs of a certain Madame de la Guette : " A Sucy, Madame de Coulanges avait auprès d'elle sa nièce, qui était une beauté à attirer tous les cœurs." Quantities of fair hair ; a dazzling complexion ; a short, straight, leonine nose, square

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at the tip ; expressive eyes but odd in colour, the one grey-blue, the other hazel, set in eyelids too deeply dark for a classic taste ; an entrancing brilliance of hue and mood, Marie de Rabutin-Chantal was perhaps “ a beauty to attract all hearts,” and yet not quite a beauty. But she was also an heiress, for the Abbé de Coulanges had taken admirable care of the orphan’s interests. And the other half of her family, the Rabutins, began at last to remember her existence. She was “ chef des armes,” head of the elder branch of that important house. Her lands marched with those of her first cousin, the young Comte de Bussy-Rabutin ; and he was sent from Burgundy to Sucy in order to have a look at her. Bussy was then eighteen years old, already colonel of his regiment, a tall, blond youth with audacious, laughing blue eyes, and nonchalant manners, cynical and elegant. He thought his cousin Marie terribly bourgeoise, and deplored her hoydenish airs and graces. “ The prettiest creature in the world to be the wife of some one else,” he said. “ No style. A fine figure, but she don’t know how to carry it. Her arms are gawky. Lovely skin and hair, but her nose is irregular, her eyes unequal—and yet, in spite of that, she contrives to be uncommonly good-looking.” Then and there began between the two cousins a strange rancorous affection. They could not do without each other and they distrusted each other. Brought

up in different traditions, with different ideals, there was yet between them a singular affinity, the sense that, in a world of charming strangers, they two were really kith and kin, so closely connected that (as Madame de Sévigné was one day to write) if the barber-surgeon bled Bussy in Burgundy, she, in Paris, immediately felt her arm ache and her head relieved. . . . Well, at first sight, Bussy disapproved of the heiress (she was very young at that first interview, barely twelve) ; he returned to Burgundy and married another granddaughter of the “*bienheureuse mère*,” with whom he tasted little conjugal felicity. He had not thought himself attracted by his Paris cousin—and yet, he admits, “I fell in love with her as soon as she had married Sévigné.” She was then eighteen.

Strange that so prudent a guardian as the Prior of Livry should have concluded so imprudent a match ! But, in France at any rate, political partisanship is a quality that blinds the keenest discernment, conferring every virtue on a confederate. In 1644 the Fronde was already in the offing ; and Henri de Sévigné was a kinsman of the future Cardinal de Retz (Paul de Gondi, Suffragan Archbishop of Paris), the hero of the popular party and of the Parliamentarians. The Fronde, it will be remembered, was a weakened, frivolous echo of the great struggle which at the same moment divided England into Royalists and

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Puritans ; with this difference, that on our side the Channel, after a few years of civil strife, the people cut off the King's head, while in France the King decapitated nascent (or re-nascent) democracy. The Marquis de Sévigné's cousin, Renaud de Sévigné, was an important captain on the side of Retz, but the young Marquis himself seems to have taken no great part in the fray. I imagine him a light, inconstant, charming creature much like his son ; but, in point of fact, we know very little about him.

The young couple seem at first to have been happy and in love. They retired to M. de Sévigné's estates in Brittany, and stayed there so long that Bussy, aided by a friend of his, sent them a comic poem of protest—an order to return :

“Salut à vous, gens de campagne,
A vous, immeubles de Bretagne,
Attachés à votre maison
Au delà de toute raison. . . .
Voyant le plus beau de votre âge
Se passer dans votre village.”

Monsieur and Madame de Sévigné came back to Paris in 1646 for the birth of their first child, Françoise-Marguerite. Two years later a son was born ; the honeymoon was a thing of the past.

In Paris, almost immediately the Marquis began to neglect his wife. Had he lived, he might, like his son, have survived both his charm and his

frivolity, but during his short career he was the least constant of husbands. "His wife was better looking than his mistresses—but then she was his wife!" explains Bussy in his *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules*. Bussy was by now the guide, philosopher, and friend of a stormy household—for Madame de Sévigné did not accept her sad situation with equanimity. She wept on the bosom of her old tutor, the scholar Ménage (who professed himself hopelessly in love with her); worse still, she confided in Bussy, who did all he could to keep the wound open and to suggest the advantages of vengeance. But Madame de Sévigné was not of an amorous temperament—she was in love with her husband, which is quite a different thing—and she rejected her cousin's addresses while continuing to favour him with her confidence. And, fortunately for them, the outbreak of civil war afforded a diversion to these turbulent young people. Madame de Sévigné was then thrown into the thick of a political conspiracy, and made her lifelong friends among its leaders: to the end of her days she will love and honour Retz, La Rochefoucauld, the Arnaulds; and her bosom friend—her intimate for more than forty years—will be that young step-daughter of Renaud de Sévigné's whom we know better as Madame de La Fayette. "'Tis a fine thing" (writes Bussy) "for a young woman of twenty to be so much mixed up in State affairs! The

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celebrated Madame de Chevreuse herself began no earlier."

Bussy was on the other side the hedge, first of all for the King and Condé, then for Condé against the King, finally for the King against Condé, when that prince had joined the Spaniards, who were invading the north of France. With all his faults, Bussy was a patriot. He sent a certain Florentine secretary of his—a philosopher with a turn for diplomacy—one Corbinelli, to negotiate his reunion with the Royalists, and then despatched the same person to Madame de Sévigné, asking her to lend him a sum of a thousand gold pistoles so that he might equip a regiment for the front. Bussy had not the money at hand, and his own honour as well as his country's necessity demanded that he should lose no time.

Madame de Sévigné was now a widow, living with her uncle in much retirement. The Marquis had been killed in a duel, fought for the sake of one of his mistresses, in February 1651; his funeral took place on the widow's five-and-twentieth birthday. She was left alone, with two children, once more the ward of Abbé de Coulanges. And she had no dearer relation than her cousin Bussy. So she promised him at once that she would come to his aid, and made great friends with the secretary Corbinelli, whom we shall meet continually in her correspondence. But when she spoke to her

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guardian of her promise, she found that the matter was less simple than she had supposed. She was a widow and a ward. Her fortune was in the hands of the "Bien-Bon," who had no opinion at all of the Comte de Bussy. Without refusing his niece outright, the Abbé put so many spokes in her wheel that it remained stock-still. Bussy, all indignation, borrowed the money from one of his mistresses, and arrived on the front just in time to take part in the glorious battle of Les Dunes, where the Spaniards were slashed to pieces : France was saved. And Bussy had helped to save it. But no thanks to Madame de Sévigné !

This incident not unnaturally provoked a coolness between the two cousins. "I left Paris" (wrote Bussy) "cut to the quick by the thought that I had been abandoned in the hour of need by the only person of my kith and kin whom I really loved ; she had forsaken me in an affair of honour when she ran no risk ; and on the morrow of the battle I reflected that I might have known the shame of absence, for all it cost a cousin who, till that hour, had been so dear to me."

"And where the dickens" (replies Madame de Sévigné) "do you suppose that I could put my hand on fifteen thousand francs ? Had I got them in my pocket ? Could I find them in the purse of a friend ? Ah, doubtless you will say that Fouquet would have given them to me for the asking ! But

I never cared to ask him for anything. And, unless the Abbé de Coulanges would have stood my surety, no one would have lent me as much as half a crown. I was in despair, I assure you, at not being able to do you a kindness." (18 August 1668.)

For ten, a dozen years, the quarrel dragged its slow length along, frequently condoned, constantly reviving. At one time Bussy put himself gravely in the wrong. At that time he was composing his loose, malevolent, but (it must be owned) amusing *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules*. People of his rank in those days did not send libels of this sort to the publisher ; they gave private readings ; they lent them in manuscript among their friends. Now, in his anger and his rancour Bussy had included his cousin among the victims of his wit. He could say nothing against her private life, but, among many compliments, he complains that her eyelids were "dappled," and her mind incapable of generosity. "Some" (he said) "will serve a friend up to the steps of the altar ; they will not commit a crime to save him. Madame de Sévigné's friendship stops when 'tis a question of loosening the purse-strings." Of these two accusations (the eyes set in with a smutty finger, the too economical heart) I know not which rankled the longer in Madame de Sévigné's soul, but I think it was the eyelids—she constantly refers to those "paupières bigarrées."

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As is usual in such cases, she was for some while ignorant of her caricature which circulated freely among her friends; but at last one of Bussy's mistresses tossed (or it may be sold) the manuscript to a printer, and Madame de Sévigné awoke to man's brutality.

"To see one's portrait in everybody's hands, to read oneself in print, to find oneself the byword of the provinces, where this sort of slander leaves an indelible stain, to notice oneself, bound, on the shelf of a library! And that such a blow should be struck—by whom? . . . I will say no more. You are clever enough to understand all my feelings, if you will but sit and think for a quarter of an hour." (26 July 1668.)

The publication of his libel had even graver consequences for Bussy than his cousin's resentment. The King was among his victims, with Mademoiselle de la Vallière and many persons about the Court. The King's displeasure resulted in a *lettre de cachet* consigning the Comte de Bussy to the Bastille. There, if he liked, he might sing in private :

"Que *Déodatus* est heureux
De baiser un bec amoureux
Qui d'une oreille à l'autre va ! *Alléluia !*"

(For Louise de la Vallière's mouth pleased the fastidious colonel no better than his cousin's eyelids.) Bussy's career was broken. He fell ill from

disappointment and chagrin and was sent to recuperate, on parole, in the house of a surgeon. Madame de Sévigné, who had still been too sore to visit him in his prison, overcame her resentment when she thought his life in danger, and went to see him at his doctor's. So soon as he could travel, he set out, a banished man, to spend eighteen years of exile on his estates in Burgundy. His cousin's brilliant letters were a great resource in his enforced idleness, and soon a singular incident of Fouquet's fall from power completed the reconciliation of the two Rabutins.

Fouquet, it will be remembered, was the great *Surintendant des Finances*, the man who had hoped to be a second Cardinal Mazarin. But Colbert nourished the same dream. They were mortal enemies. Honesty is often the best policy, and Colbert, who was honest, was able to point out to the youthful Louis Quatorze that Fouquet was decidedly too rich. Who was he? The son of a Counsellor of Parliament in Brittany. And his country-house at Vaux had recently cost the trifle of eighteen millions of francs. The poorer grew France, the richer grew Fouquet. And it was said that he meant to fortify the island of Belle-Isle and set up as an independent sovereign. His dissipation and his loose amours, his prodigalities, his taste for art and splendour, made him more like an Italian despot than the modest minister

of an autocrat. And he was more popular in those intellectual circles (which had shown themselves so unstable during the Fronde) than a jealous young monarch may think becoming in an underling.

So, suddenly, dramatically, Fouquet fell from power. He had been one of Madame de Sévigné's most constant visitors. We have seen how Bussy thought she might have borrowed from him those fifteen thousand francs that he needed. Bussy had twitted his pretty cousin with her circle of illustrious adorers, all discreetly kept at bay : there was a Prince of the Blood (Condé), a great Captain (Turenne), a Minister of State (Pomponne), a philosopher (Corbinelli), and a grand seigneur (Bussy himself). There was also "un grand Seigneur façon de prince." This imitation-prince was Fouquet, and he perhaps was the most devoted of them all. Only, as we have heard Madame de Sévigné remark, she never cared to ask him for anything. True, she did once ask him to use his influence to facilitate the marriage of her cousin, the Marquis de la Trousse. It seemed a slight request. It caused her to blush for shame.

For, among the confiscated papers contained in Fouquet's private casket, there were Madame de Sévigné's letters, treasured with a hundred *billets-doux* and compromising messages. For the second time an innocent, an impeccable young widow saw

her name held up to scorn : she had been in Bussy's libel, she was now in Fouquet's box. And tongues wagged as, in such cases, wag they will. We feel the poor lady's confusion in the letters which she sends to the two men she most respects : Simon Arnauld, Marquis de Pomponne, and her old tutor, Ménage. Her son was a lad of fifteen, her guardian a priest. Who would stand up for her ? . . . Bussy !

Bussy wrote at once to the Minister of State who, with the King, had alone examined the papers in the casket, and Le Tellier informed him that the letters of the Marquise " *étaient celles d'une amie qui avaient bien de l'esprit,*" that they had infinitely more entertained the King than those amorous effusions which accompanied them, but that Fouquet had shown very poor taste in mixing in such fashion love and friendship. Thereupon Bussy proclaimed himself his cousin's champion against all comers, and soon the affair died down.

The fall of Fouquet, the rise of Colbert, the autocracy of the young King, meant the final condemnation of the Fronde, hopelessly out of date. Thenceforth Madame de Sévigné and her friends will have no political influence. She is, so to speak, shelved ; she queens it in a brilliant backwater with no egress towards the splendours of Versailles. Despite all the Marquise's personal prestige, despite continual efforts, she will never be able to obtain a

post at Court for her young son or for her daughter's husband. Like Retz, like La Rochefoucauld, like Port-Royal, she is tarred with the brush of the Fronde. Such as they might, at a pinch, be grand in the provinces, might govern Provence, or represent the Breton nobility—the King might even now and then employ them when he thought their peculiar gifts might come in handy, but as soon as that special occasion was past he would switch off the light, leaving them in outer darkness, far from that “gloire de Niquée” of Versailles where Colbert and Louvois basked in perpetual sunshine.

Thenceforth her ardent nature is condemned to the least eventful of lives. Her children's marriages will be her sole adventures, and though son and daughter alike were handsome, intelligent, wealthy, and well born, those marriages were not easy to arrange. So great was the fear among the French nobility of offending an adored and dreaded monarch. The courtiers of Madame de Sévigné's young days had not been servile, obsequious, as were the adulators of Louis Quatorze, and she could never quite accustom herself to this burning of incense, this flat submission, of the new age, although herself a hero-worshipper of the King. But in all the movements of her nature she required a certain liberty, and that was not to be thought of at Versailles. More than once we shall find her

rebellling against some "horrible injustice"; and she murmurs when Fouquet is condemned:

"*Tantæne animis cœlistibus iræ?*"

(Have I mentioned that she was an excellent Latin scholar?)

The Cardinal de Retz an outlaw; Fouquet a prisoner in a frontier fortress with the Man in the Iron Mask for his society; Bussy dismissed from the army and banished to his Burgundian estates; Pomponne fallen from power and sent to brood in a provincial country-house; Turenne for many years a suspect until the conquest of Alsace and his own conversion shall at last conciliate the King; Port-Royal the object of incessant persecution—such were the fatal incidents that had each its sad repercussion in the heart of a woman devoted to her friends. Happily, she was also a mother, and in her case maternity was a rich compensation. If she liked her son—liked him immensely, was rarely happier than in his delightful society—she saw him without surprise follow in the steps of his father; but she loved, respected, adored the more difficult nature of her daughter.

I have said that in Françoise-Marguerite de Sévigné there was a cousinly likeness to the neurasthenic Mademoiselle de Méri; but there was also something of Saint Chantal. She was sometimes "gey ill to live wi'," but there was nothing mean

in her uncompromising, narrow, abstract mind. And she had more than her mother's beauty. According to the taste of those days she was quite beautiful, and if, in her portraits, we find her a little too plump, too pouting, too precious, that is because we are not in harmony with seventeenth-century ideals. She had splendid colouring, small neat features, a mouth like a rosebud, and great sleepy eyes. She danced in perfection, and more than once had figured in a ballet at Versailles. On one sole occasion she had had the King for her vis-à-vis. Bussy had immediately foreseen for her the triumphant career of a Montespan. But nothing was further from the ideal of Mademoiselle de Sévigné, who was a learned young lady, deep in Cartesian philosophy. (I remember one lovely prayer of hers: "Grant me to prize that wealth alone which Time may bring but cannot take away!")

"Cette beauté brûlera le monde!" exclaimed M. de Tréville when he saw her at Versailles (and, though so austere a Jansenist, he was considered a great authority on the matter), but it must be owned that Mademoiselle de Sévigné took her time in setting the world aflame. Presented at Court in her sixteenth year, at twenty she was still a maid. Her mother began to be anxious, but the girl was happy. What summer days she spent with her mother at Livry in the tranquil Priory of the Abbé de Coulanges! They would roam the forest

together, like Rosamond and Celia, carving on the trunks of trees the names of their imaginary lovers ; the young one a great D, for Descartes, and our Marquise an L, perhaps for the Comte de Lude, for whom, sometimes, she suspected herself of an unrequited passion, since a heart, they say, cannot remain unoccupied. There were other country walks at Les Rochers, but Madame de Sévigné as a rule took them alone (with a footman well within call behind her), tramping the thick woods with her foresters, her path-cutters, drawing here an avenue, there an open circle ; while Mademoiselle de Sévigné, at home, would lie full length before the fire wrapped in an old dark mantle, and, as she watched the sparks fly upward, would meditate the " Passions of the Soul " and murmur some axiom of Descartes.

The mother and daughter were inseparable companions, yet great was the joy of the Marquise when in 1669 (Mademoiselle de Sévigné being already two-and-twenty) a marriage was arranged for her with the Comte de Grignan, head of the great Provençal house of Adhémar and almost a prince in his own country, a man of sense and parts, a fine musician, but no longer young, fiercely ugly, and already twice a widower. Yet, since he was undoubtedly a " grand seigneur," Madame de Sévigné was elate at having secured him for her child. " I don't see how we could have done

better," she confided to Bussy. The Count agreed, but added that it was a pity that Grignan wore out his wives, not quite so quickly as his coats, but quicker than his horse. The Cardinal de Retz, on the other hand, most distinctly disapproved the marriage; for the magnificent Grignan was deep in debt, and his bride had to pledge her fortune as his security. Françoise-Marguerite never forgave her illustrious cousin his prudent remonstrances, would not accept his presents, nor show him any sign of affection (though it was supposed that Retz had left her his heiress) during all the course of the years.

The marriage took place in 1669, and Madame de Sévigné felt a load lifted from her heart. Though Grignan was Vice-Governor of Provence, there was at first no talk of separation, for it was hoped that the Count might exchange his provincial appointment for a post at Court. The fond mother had the joy of keeping her daughter, watching her happiness, while no longer haunted by the dread of seeing her bright beauty fade in single strictness. The fate of Mademoiselle de Méri was no longer in store for Mademoiselle de Sévigné. If we open one of the masterpieces of French classic art—a novel slowly composed about this time, though published some nine years later—if we read, in fact, the *Princesse de Clèves*, we shall, I think, find in it more than one allusion to the marriage of Madame de Grignan. The author was our Marquise's

AND HER CIRCLE

dearest friend, Madame de La Fayette, who had shared all the widow's fears concerning the future of her child. And we remember, in the novel, the anxiety of Madame de Chartres (who had lost her husband in early youth) when the time came to arrange a marriage for *her* beautiful daughter, whose blonde hair and pure complexion made her the fable of the Court. I think we may say that Madame de Chartres is a portrait of Madame de Sévigné—"a woman of the rarest virtue and merit."

"After her husband's death she had passed several years without once returning to Court, and, during her retirement, her principal occupation had been to train her daughter in the way she should go. She sought not only to cultivate her mind and the beauty of her person, but also to educate her in virtue and in all lovable qualities. Most mothers think it sufficient never to speak before their girls of any irregular love affair. Madame de Chartres was of a contrary opinion. She would paint the charms and the perils of passion; she would tell her child how few men are sincere, and acquaint her with their infidelities, their deceit, and the domestic unhappiness which may result from unlawful love. And then she would show the tranquil charm which breathes from the life of a good woman, and what elevation a true virtue adds to a person distinguished by beauty and by birth." Madame de Chartres found no one worthy to aspire to her

daughter's hand ; her pride was ruffled by several disappointments ; and when the Prince of Clèves proposed himself as a son-in-law she did not fear to give her girl to a man whom so young a bride must esteem and honour but could not love. And the Prince of Clèves was happy and yet not quite content, for he saw that he had not touched the deepest spring in his young wife's heart.

The story does not end here. M. de Grignan had several younger brothers. One of them, the Chevalier de Grignan, had entered the Order of the Knights of Malta, for he knew that the Count would disapprove of his marriage, since nothing brings a great name down so low as the wedding of cadets. All the younger brothers of M. de Grignan were bishops, archbishops, or in some military order ; this one, the Chevalier, was one of the handsomest men of his age. " I have seen the Chevalier " (writes Madame de Sévigné in April 1671) ; " he was looking as handsome as a hero of romance ; he would have done for the frontispiece of the first volume." And the gossips at Court said that, if Mademoiselle de Sévigné had shown little taste in choosing a husband, at least she knew how to select a brother-in-law.

One summer day they were all at Livry, in the garden of the Priory. The Chevalier was trying a new horse, while the ladies looked on. The animal suddenly swerved, shied, and the rider was

thrown. Whereupon Madame de Grignan fainted, and was really dangerously ill. There was a great deal of talk in Paris all that season about this double accident. The wits sang a song :

“ Matou, ne soyez pas jaloux :

Il est Grignan tout comme vous ! ”

(They called the Count “ Matou ” (Tom-cat) because of his beard and whiskers, his “ touffe ébouriffée,” and Matou was not jealous, for, like the Prince of Clèves, he knew that he had no call for jealousy, having wedded the very Soul of Honour.)

Madame de Sévigné was much distressed by all this tittle-tattle, and would complain of it sometimes to Madame de La Fayette. And now let us turn again to the novel which that lady was writing, the *Princesse de Clèves*. And we shall notice how M. de Nemours, thrown by a shying horse against a pillar of the riding-school, suffers a slight concussion of the brain and has to be helped from his seat. When at last he could open his eyes he saw, stooping above him, the pale face of the *Princesse de Clèves* : “ il connut sur son visage la pitié qu'elle avait de lui,” and so their love began.

A love that never found its earthly close ! Madame de Grignan's (if it existed) was even more immaculate. For death soon removed the “ beau Chevalier ” (whom Madame de Sévigné, by the way, no longer found so handsome, but quite

ridiculous, "with his fine sleeves trailing in the soups and the salads"). He died of the smallpox in 1672, leaving all he possessed to his lovely sister-in-law. This trait touched our Marquise, and, since he was no longer dangerous, she was willing to admit the poor man to have been generous, handsome, full of rectitude and honour; moreover, with "*une grande tendresse pour vous*," as she writes to her daughter.

But she cannot endure that daughter's obstinate melancholy, her lack of interest in life, her inexplicable neglect of her own charms, her weary indifference even to her baby girl. Françoise-Marguerite lets fall in a letter a phrase that fills her mother with dismay: "*le malheur du bonheur*." Still, she is a philosopher, and, after a sad season of mourning, she admits that little by little our feelings change and fit themselves to our necessities, while our daily deeds and duties gradually become, first of all a habit, then a pleasure.

"'Tis a thought worthy of Pascal!" exclaims her mother, enchanted; for she admired every trait of her dear Lady Disdain, except her lack of economy and her indifferent manners.

For her son, on the other hand, she kept in store a plentiful stock of friendly criticism. She loved her prodigal. Indeed, I have a suspicion that her life with him may have been pleasanter than in the society of Madame de Grignan. For Sévigné was

indefatigable in laying himself out to please. A rake in youth, a hermit when his hair turned grey, the young Marquis had nothing of his sister's stern sincerity and ponderation, but he was eminently sympathetic and companionable. No one had a more elegant taste or a kinder heart; only, as his mother said, that heart had gone demented—"le cœur était fou." It was despairing to her how little grip he seemed to have on anything—how a fortune would slip through his fingers and leave no trace, not a horse, not a banquet, not even a fine coat. And, though brave in battle, if he were bored on the front he would slip home without leave and risk being branded as a deserter. Small wonder if M. de la Trousse would do nothing to ensure his promotion! There was little to be done with Charles de Sévigné; he was quite inconsistent. But he was a devoted son, never happier than on his Breton estate of Les Rochers, whiling away the long evenings by reading aloud to his mother and his great-uncle some comedy of Molière's or some pamphlet of Pascal's—the last new books from Paris. When the Marquise fell ill of a long rheumatic fever, he nursed her through it with a woman's tenderness. And she returned his devotion. Madame de La Fayette, from her pretty Paris garden, writes in vain to her friend that she ought not to stay all winter in that damp country place and risk a second illness: "Vous êtes vieille,

ma chère !” Madame de Sévigné knew that her presence in Brittany prevented the complete liquefaction of her son’s estates, and she stuck to her guns until she had seen him safely married to an amiable and pious young lady who would take good care of him.

In Brittany, in Provence, spendthrift son and spendthrift ailing daughter were in continual need of their wise, gay mother’s counsel and companionship. Towards the end of her life she lives less and less at Paris, and when she is there she grieves at the thinning ranks of her friends, at the new ideal of life, the mingling of magnificence with sordid poverty. Her happiest hours are spent writing to Madame de Grignan on the stone table in Madame de La Fayette’s arbour of pleached lime-trees, interspersing her writing with intermittent talk. She finds there a choice society of wise and disenchanted persons, about her own age, who console themselves for many disappointments by elaborating in common a philosophy of life, of which the bitterest, the most illustrious, the immortal fruit was the *Maxims* of the Duc de La Rochefoucauld. In this gospel of ambition there is but little trace of Madame de Sévigné’s Christian fatalism and optimistic mood ; yet who knows whether, without her bright and comfortable presence, these “*pensées qui ne sont que gris-brun*” might not have turned pitch-black ? “Some

of these maxims are divine" (she writes to her daughter), "but there are others—I say it to my shame—which I can make neither head nor tail of. I wonder if you will be able to understand them?" Perhaps! There was much bitterness hidden beneath the languors of Madame de Grignan.

But La Rochefoucauld bade farewell to a world to whose changes he could not adapt his proud spirit; and then vanished his inseparable friend, the sincere, the delicate, the neurasthenic Madame de La Fayette, who never recovered from the shock. When she died, Madame de Sévigné was absent in Provence; and to her, in a last letter, the poor lady sent this touching message: "*Croyez, ma chère, que vous êtes la personne que j'ai le plus véritablement aimée.*" The Abbé de Coulanges had flickered out in extreme old age. Retz next disappeared. Madame de Sévigné had little left except her children.

Still, one or two old friends would so contrive their travels as to pass some time at Les Rochers or at Grignan on their road west or south. Little Coulanges has left exuberant letters describing more than one visit in Provence. Corbinelli was a frequent guest. More and more, as time goes on, Madame de Sévigné relies on Corbinelli for spiritual companionship. It is odd the taste she always had for persons of Italian extraction: Retz, Corbinelli, the Duke of Nevers. Corbinelli, the ugly little

Florentine, appears to us a rather disquieting, equivocal personage. He was a son of the Maréchal d'Ancre's Italian secretary, reared in the worst traditions of the Medicis, with whom he was very distantly connected; a barrister by profession and a philosopher by taste, yet (but was not Macchiavelli a philosopher?) ever ready to lend his wits to some political intrigue. Bussy had attached him to his person during the waning days of the Fronde. Corbinelli had also been the amateur adviser, the guide, philosopher, and friend of the notorious Marquis de Vardes, in whose disgrace he was involved. If we add that he was a distant cousin and, for some time, a pensioner of the Cardinal de Retz, we shall see that more than one thread connected him with our Marquise, but especially his philosophy, which filled her with delight. It has been said of Corbinelli that, from having been a Cartesian, he developed into an atheist, gradually became a Christian, and ended as a Quietist. Madame de Sévigné confused his spiritual subtleties with her own deep dependence on the will of God. Yet probably Corbinelli was sincere. In an Italian soul the passion for intrigue and ardent spirituality contrive to coexist. As his hair turned grey, Corbinelli developed a passion for the Mystics, and the more mystic the better: Saint Theresa, Molinos, Malaval—which sometimes would vex the robust commonsense of our

Marquise, and she would exclaim : “ *Epaississez-moi un peu la religion, qui s’évapore toute à force d’être subtilisée !* ” Madame de Grignan, who could not endure Corbinelli (she liked few of her mother’s friends), dubbed him “ *le mystique du diable,* ” and this neat little epigram, which hits the philosopher off so nicely, increases our regret that Madame de Grignan’s letters are almost all destroyed.

But I must restrain my pen from extending indefinitely that circle of Madame de Sévigné’s which every new generation developed and enriched. I would fain have said a word of Bussy’s daughter and her extraordinary, scandalous love affair—which at least had the advantage of leaving old Bussy to enjoy the society of a child as dear to him as Madame de Grignan was to her mother. That disavowed marriage of Madame de Coligny’s, where husband and child were ruthlessly discarded when discovered to possess an insufficient amount of quarterings, is a strange example of the havoc which pride of birth can wreak in the mind of an intelligent and reasonable being. A less enigmatic figure is that of the gallant young Marquis de Grignan, Madame de Sévigné’s grandson, doomed to an early death which, happily, she did not live to mourn.

The worst of a green old age is that those who live to enjoy it have survived their contemporaries and can with difficulty adapt themselves to the

changing spirit of their times. "Voilà presque toute la Fronde morte !" cries Madame de Sévigné, and she cannot take the new age quite so seriously : she does not love that closing seventeenth century, so splendid, yet so sordid, ruined by too many glorious victories, devastated by absolute rule and black superstition, almost destitute of that flame and flourish of chivalry which had entranced the old lady, fifty years ago. In her heart of hearts Madame de Sévigné regrets the France of the Fronde. The rich are now so servile, and the poor so poor. "How can one be rich ?" she exclaims. And it is not only of Madame de Meckelbourg that she is thinking when she writes :

"Comment peut-on, par rapport à Dieu et même à l'humanité, garder tant d'or, tant d'argent, tant de pierreries, tant de meubles au milieu de l'extrême misère des pauvres dont on est accablé dans ces derniers temps ?"

The selfishness of this sad world revolts and surprises her. Its cruelty no less. The great Poison Case with its tragic revelations, the spread of magic, the burning of human bodies at the stake in the public squares of Paris, fill our kind Marquise with a pity as keen as and more shuddering than that which she feels for the vast anonymous suffering of the poor. Her own children sometimes are parties to some "horrible injustice" which her Christian soul cannot condone. In those golden galleries of

Grignan, where neither Count nor Countess ever dream of denying themselves a new tower or a new picture, a band of musicians or a banquet, she hears indignant creditors hammering in vain at the gates and calling uselessly for the price of the goods they have supplied. And if little Pauline de Grignan may hope to be married for her beauty, her elder sister, Marie-Blanche, must willy-nilly hide her ugly nose (a paternal inheritance) in some convent so that the young Marquis may have the more to spend on his regiment and his establishment.

Madame de Sévigné had never desired great length of days. The times were out of joint and she was too tired to set them right. But doubtless God would do so in His own good time. It was in a mood of perfect submission that she drew her last breath at Grignan in the spring of 1696, shortly after her seventieth birthday, carried off by that all-prevalent smallpox which closes so many seventeenth-century biographies. Had she lived only a little longer she must have seen the end of her grandson, the hope of his house, to whose perfection so much had been sacrificed, and the sad decline and death of his broken-hearted consumptive mother. We can but say, Best so ; and repeat with Madame de Sévigné the lines she loved :

“ Quel mal peut-il arriver à une personne qui sait que Dieu fait tout et qui aime tout ce que Dieu fait ? ”

THE EDITOR'S ADVERTISEMENT

THE frequent impressions that Madame de Sevigne's Letters have undergone, both in France and other countries, would have left no room for a new Edition, had they been held only in a common degree of esteem, and like many other publications, liable to sink into oblivion; but as it is certain that they will be handed down to posterity, it becomes absolutely necessary to make them appear with all the lustre they are capable of receiving.

Some years are now past since, after many fruitless inquiries, I had the good fortune to recover a considerable number of the mother's Letters to her daughter, which I thought either lost or mislaid : I was presently sensible that if these were to be inserted in a second edition, according to their order of time, with those which had already made their appearance, that it would be rendering a new piece of service to the public ; and I found at the same time that it would be necessary to revise and compare those in the old edition with the originals themselves, if I hoped to render this compleatly perfect.

But what a number of difficulties immediately presented themselves to my mind ? the new Letters

were to be cleared from the confusion they were in, and their dates determined, and the old ones were to be revised, and some short notes added to both one and the other, which, without confounding the text, might afford such lights as would be wanted by the generality of readers : In a word, I found myself in a manner terrified at the prospect of this undertaking, and should most certainly have abandoned it, had not my regard to the memory of Madame de Sevigne got the better of that I owed to my own ease.

The office of an editor is not always confined to such narrow limits as is generally supposed : His jealousy for the success of a posthumous work he is about to publish, should make him figure to himself what the author himself would have done, had he lived to put the finishing hand to it. Tho' it is allowed on all sides, that an editor has no right to insert any thing of his own in the works of another person, yet no one certainly will contend with him the liberty of suppressing, what he does not think so proper to appear with the rest. Now, as a choice is to be made, and that this choice depends upon the discernment and taste of the editor, I shall readily agree that there was nothing wanting to compleat the glory and reputation of Madame de Sevigne, but a Pelisson, to render her the same services after her death, as he had formerly done to M. Sarrasin; and as the Abbe Massieu has in our time bestowed on one of his friends belonging to the academy : the admirable prefaces of those gentlemen, having alone been able to make the publick amends, for not having received from the hands of Sarrasin and Tourreil themselves, the

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excellent productions they left behind them. But from the persuasion that no one will think me foolish enough to expect an equal success with those two illustrious editors, I shall only say, that I have used my utmost endeavours to supply, by a long and unwearied application, what I may otherwise be deficient in.

Could Madame de Sevigne have foreseen that her Letters would one day have been made public, it is to be presumed that she would have used more art and care about them, but are we sure that she would have attained that degree of perfection that we every where remark in these Letters, had she not given herself entirely over to her own natural genius in writing them ?¹ Her style is so much the more truly epistolary, as it is generally easy and unstudied, and that she perhaps never once thought of writing a *fine* Letter.² But what do we not see done without thinking, by a happy genius, a lively wit, and a fertile imagination ? every thing received a new beauty from the pen of Madame de Sevigne, and grew more animated and picturesque, and even where the thoughts are most gay and sparkling, nothing ever escaped that does not seem the pure result of some nice and delicate sentiment ; so that it may be said her wit always appears an attendant

¹ I was always of opinion, that Madame de Sevigne was for Letter-writing, what La Fontaine is for Fables. They are both such perfect models in their respective kinds, that it is no small merit to be capable even of comprehending their real worth. Ille se profecisse sciat, cui Cicero valde placebit ! Quintillian.

² See the note in Vol. 8 where Madame de Sevigne has a criticism on Letters that are too studied.

on her heart. But I am to blame to dwell thus long on a subject to which I am in no wise equal ; and shall therefore proceed to give an account of my conduct in this second edition.

All the new Letters are marked at the head with an Asterisk (*) ; but likewise when a new article occurs in any of the old ones, which is the least interesting, the *Asterisk* is placed occasionally either at the beginning or in the body of the Letter, and that article is continued on to the next period. But if the new article consists only of a few lines, then it has no (*). But it may be asked, what occasion there was to insert so many new articles in those Letters, which have already made their appearance ? To this I answer, that those were at first printed from imperfect copies, and the originals have come into my hands since. As to the notes, the old ones have been almost all changed, or cast over again in this edition, and several new ones added, insomuch that the reader will easily perceive there has been nothing omitted to render such passages as were most difficult as intelligible as possible. Not that I imagine I have left nothing wanting of that kind ; for, besides several little hints and allusions, to which I could find no key in Madame de Grignan's answers,¹ I must freely confess that there are others, the explanation of which I have entirely given up, as it appears to me that one must have had an intimate

¹ It is now certain that the daughter's Letters are no longer in being ; and that in the year 1734, which was the time that the first four Volumes of Madame de Sevigne's Letters made their appearance, those of Madame de Grignan were already sacrificed to a scruple of religion.

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acquaintance with Madame de Sevigne herself to be able to understand them ; but with regard to such things or facts as were of a nature to explain each other, I have been as careful as possible to make proper references to the pages where they are to be found.

But I have yet a word or two to offer concerning the exact revisal of the old Letters with their originals ; this was the more necessary, as I was enabled thereby not only to restore such passages as had been suppressed in the former edition, and to supply others which I thought deserving of the press, but likewise to correct some very essential errors, which had even crept into the Paris edition in six volumes, and which had been multiplied to such a degree in the different impressions, as in many places greatly to disfigure the text. Let me then assure the public that this new edition, exclusive of the many additions in it, is worthy of their regard, if only on account of its correctness. I should not, however, be in the least surprised if it met with as little favour as the former one, from the author of a certain Dictionary, who seems to have given Madame de Sevigne's Letters a place there, only to confound them in the general odium which he endeavours to cast on a number of our best books of morality and devotion. But what avail the efforts of such an adversary ? They are likely to meet with much the same success as one who should seriously set about persuading us, that darkness is much preferable to light.

To this new edition is added the collection of choice Letters, which appeared some years ago in

LETTERS OF MARCHIONESS DE SEVIGNE

one Vol. in twelves. This work was intended as a supplement to the edition in eight Volumes, which had been published just before.

This collection contains *One hundred and three Letters*, which tho' not all of them Madame de Sevigne's, have nevertheless such a relation to, and connection with hers, as not to admit of their being separated.

In effect, they are most of them wrote at the same time, and by the same persons with whom Madame de Sevigne lived in the most intimate friendship, and are kind of answers ; and in some of them, for instance, in the edition in eight Volumes, we find several entertaining anecdotes of the history of Louis XIV. in which we can easily trace the same style.

Several persons having expressed a great inclination to see this last work incorporated with the first, it was to satisfy so just and laudable a desire that we now present the public with a new edition of these Letters, so greatly esteemed, and with justice looked upon as *immortal*, in which the *new Letters* will be found disposed in order of time, without increasing the number of Volumes ; so that we may affirm this edition to be greatly superior to any former ones, not only for its many considerable and interesting additions, but likewise in point of beauty and correctness.

PREFACE
TO
THE EDITION OF 1734

THE Letters of a mother to her daughter, however perfect and excellent in their kind, seem productions destined to remain in oblivion ; this would doubtless have been the lot of those of Madame de Sevigne to Madame de Grignan, which would never have seen the light, had not a regard for her glory and reputation rendered it necessary to commit an act of infidelity to her in this respect after her death.

An imperfect manuscript of several of her Letters, which had been at first lent to some persons for their perusal only, soon passed through the hands of different people, who most of them took copies of them, which produced two surreptitious editions,¹ which appeared in 1726, under the title of *Letters of Mary de Rabutin-Chantal, Marchioness of Sevigne, to her daughter the Countess de Grignan*. Imperfect as this edition was, the name of *Sevigne* instantly roused

¹ Those of Rouen and the Hague in two Vols., not to mention a kind of pamphlet, printed at Troyes, containing a collection of about fifty of Madame de Sevigne's Letters, which made its appearance some small time before these editions were made public.

the attention of the public, who received it with the greatest eagerness, and seemed to regard nothing but the excellencies and beauties which shone thro' all the defects of these two editions. It was then that Madame de Sevigne's family, justly incensed at the use that had been made without their knowledge or consent, of what they looked upon as a part of their property, found themselves in a manner constrained to admit of a new collection, in which all possible regard might be had to the memory of Madame de Sevigne, and the justice due to the public.

But as the errors and blunders with which the two editions above-mentioned abounded, could be attributed to nothing but the hurry in which they had been published, I judged that no time or pains were to be spared, to render the publication of such Letters as those of Madame de Sevigne as correct as possible.

No sooner had I an opportunity of having recourse to the originals of these admirable Letters, than I found that what had hitherto been published of them, were nothing in comparison to those which yet remained behind ; upon this I immediately formed the design of a more ample and correct edition : But as these Letters were to be disposed in order of time, and Madame de Sevigne had only marked the day of the month and week, and given herself no concern about the date of the year, I took the resolution of turning over a prodigious number of Letters, the most of them very much confused, and in loose sheets ; so that it was not without the greatest labour that I at length found out the true dates. A

labour of this kind was much more likely to disgust than encourage me in my undertaking, if the pleasure which accompanied the thoughts of success had not carried it above every other consideration.

Having thus reduced these Letters to their proper order ; I next thought myself authorised to suppress such little circumstances as related merely to family affairs, or were otherwise of little consequence to the public ; but could I think of using the same freedom with those sentiments of maternal fondness and affection with which they abound ? On the contrary, I had always looked on them as constituting the very essence of Madame de Sevigne's character, and the noble, delicate, and diversified turns made use of by her, in expressing her tenderness, appeared to me no less a part of her composition than that tenderness itself. It is certain, that one does not easily get over the surprise that this singular manner of expression occasions, but however unusual, and above the common level, these sentiments may appear, they are nevertheless all taken from pure nature ; and if it is difficult to conceive rightly the force of an equal sympathy, is it not likewise to be considered as one of the effects arising from the corruption of the human heart, that our fondness for such an excess of sensibility is confined to the weakest of all the passions ?

The only reflections that we intend to make on the style of Madame de Sevigne shall be borrowed from herself. " Is it possible, *says she*,¹ that my Letters should be so agreeable to you as you say they are ? I find nothing like it when they come out of

¹ See the Letter of 23 December, Vol. 2.

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my hands, I fancy they get it in passing through yours ; in short, it is very lucky for you that you do like them, for you are so loaded with them that you would be heartily to be pitied were it otherwise. M. de Coulanges wants sadly to know which of your ladies it is that has a taste for them ; we look upon it as a very good sign on her side, for my style is so loose, that it requires a good share of natural understanding, and knowledge of the world, to be able to take up with it."

In another place she says, " You know I write off-hand, which makes my Letters so loose, but it is my style, and perhaps it has a greater effect than one more studied." And again, " My Letters are wrote off-hand, I never strive to mend, but I make them worse." And, " If you find a thousand faults in this Letter, excuse them, for there is no reading it over." ¹

It is from the perusal of these Letters, then, that we can alone form a just idea of the real beauties of a style which can never be perfectly described, and what is justly looked upon as the model of epistolary writing.

I could have wished to have been possessed of a greater number of circumstances, to render the historical elogium of Madame de Sevigne as compleat as possible ; but after the strictest inquiries that I could make, I have been able to gather only what follows.

Marie de Rabutin, Lady of Chantal and Bourbilli, was born the 5th of February, 1626, of Celsus

¹ Most of Madame de Sevigne's Letters were of such a length, that she seldom had time to read them over.

Benignus Rabutin, Chevalier and Baron of Chantal, Bourbilli, &c. Chief of the elder branch of Rabutin, and of Mary de Coulanges his wife.

The Baron de Chantal, her father, was the son of Christopher de Rabutin and Jane-Frances Fremiot,¹ he was killed² the 22d of July, 1627, at a descent of the English on the Isle of Rhe, in which place he commanded a squadron of gentlemen volunteers: By his death Marie de Rabutin, then only one year and some months old, was left sole heiress to the estate and honours of that branch of Rabutin; her mother, Mary de Coulanges, and Christopher de Coulanges her uncle, took a particular care of her infancy, and applied themselves to make the most of the happy endowments with which nature had distinguished her, by giving her a christian and sober education. She learned Latin, Spanish, and Italian, sufficient to read the best authors in either of these languages, as well poets as others.

At the age of eighteen she married³ Henry Marquis de Sevine,⁴ of one of the most illustrious houses in Brittany; by him she had one son and a daughter: Her husband, who was naturally of a roving disposition, was guilty of frequent infidelities, which gave her a sensible uneasiness; but though he was wanting in that attachment to her, of which

¹ Foundress of the order of the visitation, and afterwards by the name of the blessed mother of Chantal.

² It is affirmed, that the Baron de Chantal was killed by Cromwell's own hand. See the Life of Cromwell, by Gregorio Leti.

³ The first of August, 1644.

⁴ He was Marechal des Camps et Armees du Roi, and governor of Fougères.

she was so worthy, she nevertheless regretted his death in the most unfeigned manner, which happened the 2d of February, 1651, in a duel with the Chevalier d'Albret.

The tenderness of Madame de Sevigne for her children, soon induced her to employ her cares in their education, and likewise to settle the family affairs upon the best footing. In this, indeed, she was chiefly assisted by her uncle,¹ a man of great merit, and remarkable abilities, who, upon the death of M. de Coulanges, grand-father to Madame de Sevigne by the mother's side, found himself charged with the tutelage of his niece,² for whom he conceived so warm a friendship and esteem, that death alone was capable of separating him from her; to which we ought to add, that nothing could equal the gratitude and attachment of the niece on her side, and the intimate union they lived in, did an honour to both. But what cannot be sufficiently applauded in Madame de Sevigne, is the strict regard she had to fulfilling the several duties she had prescribed herself; insomuch that, though left a widow at the age of five and twenty, and possessed of every other qualification that could make her sought after, she never entertained a thought of a second marriage.

A conduct so praise-worthy did not fail to meet with all the success it merited. Charles Marquis de Sevigne, her son,³ was distinguished by every accomplishment proper to gain him a pleasing repu-

¹ Christopher de Coulanges, Abbe of Notre-dame de Livri.

² In 1636.

³ Born in March, 1647; he was Lieutenant in the Dauphin's Gens d'Armes, and the King's Lieutenant of the County of Nantz.

tation in the world ; and Frances-Margaret de Sevigne, her daughter, appeared in it with the greatest advantages. The fame of her wit, beauty, and conduct, had already reached the court, when Madame de Sevigne introduced her there, for the first time, in 1663.

All the amiable qualities which could render a daughter like her mother, were united in the person of this young lady : who then so capable as herself of inspiring Madame de Sevigne with the greatest tenderness, and of filling every part of the best and most sensible heart that ever was ? “ If you are my preservative, *says the mother to the daughter*,¹ I am but too much indebted to you, and cannot surely too much *love the love* I have for you.”

Mademoiselle de Sevigne was married the 29th of January, 1669, to Francis de Castellane, Adhemar de Monteuil, Count of Grignan, Knight of the King's Orders, and Lieutenant-General in the government of Provence, and of his Majesty's forces.

Madame de Sevigne had flattered herself, that in marrying her daughter to a courtier, she should have passed her life with her, not once foreseeing, that for that very reason Madame de Grignan, whose wit, youth, and beauty, were, in a particular manner, formed to adorn such a court as that of Louis XIV., which was, as every one knows, the center of pleasure, gallantry, and polite amusements, was to see herself in a manner banished from thence for ever. But, however, it happened, M. de Grignan, a short time after his marriage, received an order from the King to repair to his government in Provence, where he

¹ See the letter of the 13th of November, 1675, Vol. 4.

afterwards constantly commanded in the absence of the Duke de Vendome, the chief governor. This circumstance laid Madame de Grignan under the necessity of making frequent journies to Provence, and became the source of infinite disquiet to Madame de Sevigne. She was so excessively affected with this separation, that one would have thought her love for her daughter was rendered yet more lively by it: Her whole thoughts were bent upon nothing but the means of seeing her again, sometimes at Paris, whither her daughter would repair to her, or in Provence, whither she used to go in search of her daughter. It was, however, impossible but that these meetings should have intervals sufficiently long to give occasion to a correspondence, which was kept up on both sides with the last degree of exactness. The mother's letters, which have been carefully preserved, do not a little contribute to make us regret the loss of the daughter's answers :¹ And, indeed, nothing would have been a greater entertainment than to have heard Madame de Grignan speak, after having been in a manner present at the conversations of Madame de Sevigne : But on the whole, I think we may esteem ourselves extremely happy in the portion that has fallen to our lot.

The polite reader will here meet with a noble, delicate, and sprightly turn of conversation, lively narrations, expressions of genius, strokes of eloquence and beauties, that arise immediately from the subject, without any affectation, any appearance of art, or false fire ; the wit which is diffused

¹ See the note to the advertisement preceding this preface, page xliv.

through these letters, being so intimately blended with a gay imagination, or a delicate sentiment, that we never see any thing but elegant nature appear throughout the whole ; and I shall not make the least scruple to assert, that the letters of Madame de Sevigne will be handed down to posterity, as the most finished models of the Epistolary stile, being warranted in this, by two learned men of the first rank in the literary world ; one of whom has declared,¹ that “ Madame de Sevigne deserved a place among the most illustrious women of her time ” : And the other,² in speaking of *the collection of her letters to her daughter*, declares himself “one of their most zealous admirers ; that in his opinion they are master-pieces in that species of writing, not to be paralleled by either ancients or moderns.”

I may also safely add, that those of the strictest piety will be charmed with reading these letters, most of which may be regarded as so many different treatises of christian morality, and are by so much the more useful, as they are not presented on that footing : Here virtue is put into action, and appears adorned with every thing that can make her truly lovely and estimable. The purest maxims of religion are here unfolded and explained, and in some places we should meet with a discussion of the most sublime truths ; but for the extreme

¹ See Bayle's letters, page 652, Rotterdam, 1714, in 12mo, where, in speaking of the letters inserted among those of the Count de Bussi, he gives the preference to Madame de Sevigne's above those of M. de Bussi's.

² The late President Bouhier, in a letter to the Editor of the 22d of June, 1734.

reserve which Madame de Sevigne always observed in matters of this kind, and which frequently caused her to be silent when they were in dispute. And, in effect, we find her speaking of a book she intended to read,¹ “ I will let you know, *says she to her daughter*, if it falls within the compass of my understanding ; if it does not, I shall quit it with all humility, and not be vain enough to pretend to a knowledge that I am not mistress of.” But when, if at any time drawn away by her subject, she gives her imagination the wing, and soars above her usual flight, she does it in the most sublime and enlightened manner ; and, which is most admirable in her, without ever losing sight of her own good principles.

The letters from the mother to the daughter have yet this other advantage, that being wrote for Madame de Grignan alone, and without Madame de Sevigne having the least reason to imagine they would one day be in the hands of the publick ; they surpass, both in ease and elegance, all others not wrote to that dear daughter. We may judge of the truth of this by her letters to the Count de Bussi, which, however admirable they are, cannot prevent our *thinking* she *wrote* to her cousin ; whereas, in reading these, we *feel*, that she *spoke* to her daughter, and that we are present at a real conversation : And what would one not give to hear Madame de Sevigne speak, were she now alive ?

It was about the latter end of May, 1665, that Madame de Sevigne made her last journey to Grignan ; she was there present at the marriage of her grandson, the Marquis de Grignan, with

¹ See the letter of the 15th of June, 1680, Vol. 7.

Mademoiselle de St. Amant : There is a very pretty description of this wedding, in a letter from her to M. de Coulanges, of the 3d of February, 1695 : In another letter to the same person, of the 15th of October, 1695, she speaks of a disorder which Madame de Grignan then laboured under. " It is now three months since my daughter has been afflicted with a sort of disorder which they tell me is not dangerous, but which appears to me the most melancholy and alarming in the world. I protest, my dear cousin, it almost kills me, and I am not able to support the bad nights I pass on her account : In short, the last attack was so violent, that she was forced to be bled in the arm ; a strange remedy to draw away more blood, when there has been but too much lost already ; it is lighting the candle at both ends : This is her own expression, for notwithstanding her extreme weakness, and the visible alteration in her, nothing ever was equal to her courage and patience, &c." It is easy to suppose what Madame de Sevigne must have suffered in such circumstances : It was impossible for her to sustain, as she did, six months continual apprehension for the life of a beloved child, without finding her own health greatly affected by it : She was wont to rise several times in the night, to see if her daughter slept, and was utterly regardless of her own health, to watch over that of Madame de Grignan. Worn out at last with cares and fatigue, she fell ill herself, the 6th of August, 1696, of a continual fever, which carried her off the 14th day, at the age of seventy years and two months. The end she made was every way worthy of the tender-

ness she had always shewn for her daughter ; but the high notions she appeared to have of religion, in calling for, and receiving the last sacraments the 5th day of her disorder, left no room to doubt, that in making a sacrifice to God of her life, she made him that of her affections also.

The grief of Madame de Grignan was proportioned to the greatness of her loss ; and nothing can have less foundation in truth, than the opinion of some, that the mother died at variance with her daughter ; for nothing more ever happened, during the whole course of their lives, but a few transient clouds, formed by excess of tenderness : and, indeed, what subject of complaint could Madame de Grignan have against such a mother, unless that of being too well beloved by her ? *Quid enim nisi se quereretur amatam.* Ovid Metam.

Madame de Sevigne has drawn so admirable a picture of herself in her own letters, that, being unwilling to rob the reader of the pleasure of hearing her explain herself on what the most regards her, I have not taken notice of many little circumstances of her life, with which she entertains her daughter in the course of their correspondence : I shall only beg leave to observe, that it would be doing great injustice to the character of Madame de Sevigne, to form our judgment of it from the sketch left us by her cousin the Count de Bussi, in his *History of the Amours of the Gauls*, written in 1659, where the good qualities, that he is in a manner forced to allow Madame de Sevigne, are concealed with as evident affectation, as the slight faults he imagines he has discovered in her, are maliciously exaggerated. It

is well known that he was never fond of his cousin, and that he afterwards, in his letters, made a public recantation of all he had said to her prejudice ; but to this false portrait of Madame de Sevigne, let us not forget to oppose that which was drawn of her by Madame de la Fayette,¹ her bosom friend, and one of the greatest wits of the last age, in the character of an *unknown*, and addressed to herself.

“ It is the common practice of those who go about to give a description of the fair, to set their imagination on the rack, to paint them as beautiful as possible, in hopes of pleasing them, but at the same time dare not say a word to them of their faults. As for me, Madam, thanks to my privilege of *incognito*, I am going to describe you with the greatest freedom, and can venture to tell you your own, without the least apprehension of drawing your resentment upon me. I am concerned to the last degree that I can say nothing to you upon this subject, but what must be agreeable to you to hear ; for it would give me great pleasure, after having reproached you with a thousand faults, to find myself as well received by you this winter, as the numbers that make it the business of their lives to stun you with praises. I shall not heap many of these on you, nor amuse myself with telling you, that you have an admirable shape, and a complexion, whose bloom speaks you but twenty at most ; that your mouth, your teeth, and your hair, have not their equal ; no, I shall not be at the pains of telling

¹ Mary Magdalen de la Vergne, Countess de la Fayette, author of several productions, which were equally admired for the agreeableness of the style and delicacy of the sentiments.

you all this, your glass tells it to you sufficiently every day : But as you do not hold very frequent conversations with it, it cannot let you know how amiable you are when you speak, and that is what I want to inform you of. Know then, Madam, if haply you know it not already, that your wit so adorns and beautifies your person, that nothing on earth can appear so lovely, when free from all restraint, you give a loose to your soul in familiar conversation. All that you say has such a charm in it, and becomes you so well, that your words draw the smiles and graces round you ; and the brilliancy of your wit adds such a lustre to your face and eyes, that though wit is supposed to affect us by the ears only, it is certain that yours dazzles the sight, and that when we hear you speak, we no longer conceive that your features can want any thing of perfection, and allow you to be the most finished beauty that ever existed. You may judge by this, that if I am unknown to you, you are not so to me, and that I must have had the honour of seeing and hearing you, to be able to discover what it is that gives you that charm, which so captivates every one. But I shall now let you see, Madam, that I am as well acquainted with the solid beauties you are possessed of, as with those exterior charms which render you the object of general admiration. You have a noble and exalted soul, formed to dispense treasures, and incapable of stooping to the mean cares of amassing them. You are sensible to glory and ambition, and have a taste for the softer pleasures : You seem born for them, and they appear made for you : Your presence adds joy and mirth to diversions,

and your beauty receives an addition from being in the midst of those diversions : In a word, joy is the true state of your mind, and sadness becomes you least of any person whatever : You are by nature tender and compassionate ; but, to the eternal reproach of our sex, that tenderness has been of no use to you ; and you have confined it to your own, in bestowing it on Madame de la Fayette : Ah ! Madam, were it possible there should be a man in the world whom you thought worthy that treasure she possesses, and that he left any thing undone to gain it, he ought to experience every torment that is in the power of love to inflict, in the whole round of his extensive empire. What a happiness to be the master of such a heart as yours, and to hear its sentiments expressed by that accomplished wit which heaven has bestowed on you. Your heart, Madam, is certainly a blessing that is not to be merited, since never was there one so generous, tender, and sincere. There are some who suspect you of not always shewing it as it really is : But so far are you from deserving that reproach, that being accustomed to feel nothing in it but what is strictly honourable, you are sometimes rather apt to discover what prudence would oblige you to conceal. You are the most civil and obliging person that ever was, and from an air of sweetness and familiarity which runs thro' your whole deportment, the common compliments that are the mere effects of good breeding, seem protestations of friendship, when coming from your mouth ; and all who go from you, depart persuaded of having your good wishes and esteem, without being able to tell them-

selves any particular mark you have given them of either. In a word, Heaven has blessed you with gifts unknown to any besides yourself, and the world is indebted to you for coming to shew it a thousand agreeable qualities, to which it was hitherto a stranger. I shall not pretend to describe all these to you, or I should break through my design of not heaping praises upon you ; on the other hand, Madam, to be able to give you such as *are suitable to your merit, and worthy to appear in publick, one ought to be your lover, and that is what I have not the honour to be.*"¹

¹ Alluding to the two last lines in the funeral elegy of Voiture, by Sarrasin.

Dignes de vous, & dignes de paroître, il faudroit etre votre amant, & je n'ai pas l'honneur de l'etre.

LETTERS
OF THE
MARCHIONESS DE SEVIGNE
LETTER I

CARDINAL DE RETZ TO MADAME DE SEVIGNE

Commerci, 20 Dec. 1668.

IF the interests of Madame de Meckelbourg,¹ and those of Mareschal d'Albret, are alike indifferent to you, Madam, I shall solicit in behalf of the Cavalier, because I have four times the regard for him, that I have for the lady ; but if it is your desire that I should solicit for the lady, I will do it with the greatest readiness, because I esteem you a million times more than I do the Cavalier ; if you would have me observe a neutrality, I shall do it inviolably : In short, you have but to speak, and be punctually obeyed. I am not in the least surprised at the apprehensions my Niece² is under ; I have long ago perceived that she degenerates : but however great you describe her

¹ Elizabeth-Angelica de Montmorenci, widow of Gaspard de Coligni, Duke of Chatillon : and married again in February, 1664, to Christian-Louis de Meckelbourg.

² Mademoiselle de Sevigne, afterwards Countess of Grignan.

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shudderings, on the important day of conclusion,¹ I much question whether they equal mine for the consequences, since I have seen by a letter of yours that you neither have, nor wish for any further *ecclaiircissement*, but leave all to destiny, which by the bye is oftentimes very ungrateful, and little deserving of the confidence we place in it. I really find myself without comparison more sensible to what regards you and that dear child, than to any thing that ever regarded myself the nearest. But now, Madam, you are not to blame either the Cardinal Datar,² or me, that nothing has as yet been done for Corbinelli. A person belonging to the Datar's office, in whom I placed some confidence, has made use of my name to obtain a great many favours, and has deceived me in three or four articles ; if he has acted by Corbinelli, as he has done by several others on the same occasion, I question whether his name has been so much as once mentioned since my first letter. It is not a fortnight ago since this same man wrote me a long detail of this affair, and of some others that I had recommended to his care ; and I have discovered two falsities in the account he sent me, not with regard to Corbinelli, indeed, but as I find he has told me lies concerning the others, I imagine he may have done the same with regard to him also : I shall take care to remedy this to the utmost of my power by the first post : you cannot think what vexation this affair has given me.

¹ This relates to the marriage of Mademoiselle de Sevigne with M. de Grignan, which was solemnized the 29th of Jan. following.

² The chief Officer in the Pope's Chancery, at Rome,

LETTER II

MADAME DE SEVIGNE TO THE COUNT DE GRIGNAN.¹

Paris, Wednesday 23 June, 1670.

YOU wrote me the most charming letter in the world, to which I should have returned an answer much sooner, had I not known that you was traversing your province. I should likewise have sent you the musick you desired, but have not been able to get it as yet : in the mean time let me tell you that I love you most tenderly, and if that is capable of giving you the satisfaction you assure me it does, you ought to be the most contented man in the world. You must certainly be so in the correspondence you carry on with my daughter ; it appears to me very lively on her part, and I do not think any one can possibly love another more than she does you. I hope, on my side, to return her to you safe and sound, and with a little one the same, or I'll burn my books. I am not very skilful indeed myself, but I can ask advice, and know how to follow it ; and my daughter on her side does all in her power to take care of herself.

I have a thousand compliments to make you from M. de la Rochefoucault² and his Son³ ; they have

¹ Monsieur de Grignan had been some time in Provence, whither the king's service had obliged him to go, and Madame de Grignan his Lady had remained at Paris on account of her being big with child.

² Francis, Duke de la Rochefoucault, author of the *Maxims*.

³ The Prince de Marsillac.

received all your letters. Madame de la Fayette¹ returns you many thanks for your remembrance of her, as do my aunt² and the Abbe, who is very fond of your wife ; this I assure you is no small matter, for if she was not very prudent, he would hate her without the least reserve.

If an opportunity should offer of being serviceable to a gentleman of your country, whose name is ***, I beg you will do it ; you cannot give me a more agreeable mark of your friendship. You did promise me a canonship for his brother : you know all his family. The poor lad was particularly attached to Monsieur Fouquet³ ; he was convicted of having conveyed a letter to Madame Fouquet, from her husband, for which he was condemned to the galleys for five years, a thing which is a little extraordinary : You know he is one of the honestest young fellows living, and as fit for the galleys as he is to fly in the air.

Branças⁴ is very well satisfied with you, and does not intend to spare you when he shall have occasion for your service. He persuades himself that you can never do enough, to acquit yourself of the obligation you are under to him for giving you so charming a wife, and one who loves you so tenderly. Adieu, my dear Count, I embrace you with all the tenderness of my heart.

¹ Mary Magdalen de la Vergne, Countess de la Fayette.

² Henrietta de Coulanges, Marchioness de la Trousse, sister to Mary de Coulanges, the mother of Madam de Sevigne.

³ Nicholas Fouquet, Sur-Intendant of the Finances.

⁴ Charles Count de Branças, gentleman of honour to Queen Anne of Austria ; who was remarkable for his great absence of mind.

LETTER III

TO THE SAME

Paris, Wednesday 6 August, 1670.

WELL ! Is it not true that I have given you the prettiest wife in the world ? Can any one be more prudent, more regular in their conduct ? Can any one love you with greater affection ? Can any one have more christian sentiments ? Can any one long more ardently to be with you ? And can any one attend more strictly to the duties of their station ? It is ridiculous enough to say all this of my own daughter ; but I admire her as other people do, and perhaps rather more, as I am more an eye-witness of her behaviour ; and to own the truth to you, whatever good opinion I had of her in the principal points, I never once thought she would have been so exact in all the others as she is. I assure you, every body does her justice, and she loses none of those praises which are so much her due. It is an old maxim of mine, and what may perhaps one day or another pull an old house about my ears, that the publick is neither foolish nor unjust : As for Mad. de Grignan, she has too much reason to be contented with it to dispute that point with me at present. She has been under inconceivable distress about your health ; I heartily rejoice at your recovery, as well on account of the love I bear to you, as that I have for her. I beg of you, if you expect any more attacks from your disorder, that you will prevail on it, at least, to stay till your wife is brought to bed. She is every day making complaints about being kept

LETTERS OF THE

here, and declares very seriously that it was a great piece of cruelty to separate her from you. It looks as if we had taken a pleasure in placing you at two hundred leagues distance from her. I desire you will in your next endeavour to make her easy on this head, and let her know the pleasure you have of the thoughts of her lying-in so agreeably where she is. It was absolutely impossible to have had her down in the condition she was in ; and nothing can be better for her health, and indeed for her reputation, than to lie in where the best assistance is to be had, and to remain in a place where her conduct has been so very much admired. If after all this she will become a fool and a giddy creature, it will be a twelve month, at least, before it will be credited ; such a good opinion has every body of her prudence. I call all the Grignans that are here to witness the truth of what I say. I have not a little joy in it, upon your account ; for, indeed, I do most sincerely love you, and am charmed to find that the event has so well justified your choice. I shall tell you no news, that would be infringing my daughter's rights ; I only beg you to be assured that no one can interest themselves more affectionately in every thing that concerns you.

LETTER IV

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday 15 August, 1670.

WHEN I write to you so frequently, I would have you remember that it is on condition that you do not return any answer. In confidence

of which I shall proceed to tell you, that I am heartily rejoiced at the many honours that are conferred on you. It appears to me that the Commandant has no more share in them than M. de Grignan ; and I think I see a foundation for you that would not be for another. I find there is so brisk a correspondence kept up between a certain lady and you, that it would be ridiculous to pretend to give you any information. There is not so much as a hope of acquainting you that she loves you ; her every action, her whole conduct, with all her little anxieties and cares about you, tell it plain enough. I am very delicate in point of friendship, and pretend to know something about it. I own to you that I am perfectly well satisfied with that which I see, and could not wish it greater. Enjoy it to the utmost, and never be ungrateful. If there is a little place left in your heart, you will do me the greatest pleasure in giving it to me ; for, I assure you, you hold a very considerable one in mine. I do not tell you how much care I take of your dear half, that I have the greatest regard to her health, and that I heartily wish the vessel safely unladen in port : If you know what it is to love, you will easily judge of my sentiments. Would to God your poor wife was as happy as the little Deville ! She has just been brought to bed of a boy, that looks as if he was three months old : Ah ! said my daughter just now, how vexed am I ! Little Deville has taken my boy from me, two such never can come together in one house. I have given her, my daughter I mean, a book for you ; you will find it extremely beautiful ; it is written by an intimate

LETTERS OF THE

friend¹ of Paschal's, nothing but what is perfect comes from that quarter ; pray read it with attention. I have sent you likewise some fine airs till I can get the other musick. Do not lose your voice, preserve your genteel air ; in a word, cease not to be amiable since you are so much loved.

LETTER V

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday 12 Sept. 1670.

THIS is not with a design to establish a correspondence with you ; no, I should be cautious how I did that, knowing how much you have already upon your hands from Madame de Grignan. I really pity you for having such long letters to read : I never saw any thing so strong, and I believe from my heart that you would gladly have her with you, to be delivered from them ; to such straits has her importunity reduced you. She has just now separated herself from us, and retired to one corner of her room, with a little table and a desk before her ; as not thinking M. de Coulanges, or myself, personages worthy of approaching her : She is quite in despair about your having wrote to me : I never saw such a little envious jealous creature in my life. However, I defy her, let her do what she will, to interrupt our friendship. You have a great part in the care I take of her health, and whenever I reflect upon the pleasure you will

¹ Monsieur Nicole.

MARCHIONESS DE SEVIGNE

feel in having a wife and a son both full of life and spirit, I redouble my application to procure you this joy. I hope all matters will go well. We begin to think, for some days past, that this same young one will certainly be a lad. Adieu, my dear, I positively forbid you to write to me ; but I entreat of you to love me.

MONSIEUR DE COULANGES¹

TO THE SAME

You may say and do as you please, Sir, but I must now tell you, that I am extremely well pleased that you like the Intendant of Lyons, and his wife.² They are both of them highly delighted with you ; and every-body, my sister-in-law³ not excepted, writes a thousand handsome things of you to us. Pray never take the trouble of answering me ; only give me leave, as I happen to be here while the good folks are writing to you, to assure you, that you have no one more devoted to your service than myself.

Your lady is as handsome as an angel. Your lady lives the life of an angel ; and if it please God she will be brought to bed as happily as an angel.

¹ Philip-Emanuel de Coulanges, master of the requests, so well known in the gay world for his wit, humour, and the singular talent he had for a jovial song. He was cousin-german to M. de Sevigne.

² Monsieur and Madame du Gue-Bagnols, whose eldest daughter was married to M. de Coulanges.

³ Mademoiselle du Gue-Bagnols, who was afterwards married to Monsieur du Gue-Bagnols, intendant of Flanders, her own cousin.

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This is all I have to say to you for this day. As you seem to like my sister-in-law, I wish you would get her a good match in your province : She is a niece of M. de Tellier, and cousin-german to M. de Louvois.

LETTER VI

TO THE SAME

Paris, Wednesday 19 Nov. 1670.

MADAME de Puisieux¹ says, that if you have such a mind for a son, you should have taken the pains to have got one : I must own, I think what she says is very just and reasonable. You left a little wench in our hands, and a little wench we return you. Never was labour so favourable ! You must know that my daughter and I went last Saturday to take a walk in the Arsenal, she felt some slight pains ; when we came home I was for sending for Madame Robinette, but she would by no means agree to it. We supped, and every thing was very well. She eat pretty heartily. The Coadjutor² and I were for giving her chamber a little the air of a lying-in woman's, but she still opposed it, in such a manner that we thought it was nothing but a fit of the cholick. At last, as I was going to send for Robinette, the pains came on stronger and stronger, and continued in such a manner ! her

¹ Charlotte d'Estampes-Valancai, Marchioness de Puisieux.

² John-Baptist, Adhemar de Monteil, Coadjutor of Arles, brother to M. de Grignan.

cries were so violent, so piercing ! that we presently found it was her labour. But the worst of it was, that there was no midwife. We none of us knew what we did ; for my part I was just wild. My daughter cried out for assistance, and for the midwife, and not without reason, poor girl ; for we had sent in all haste for the midwife that laid Deville, and she had not been in the room a quarter of an hour before the child came : And just at that instant Piquet came in, who assisted to lay her. When all was over Robinette arrived, and was quite surprised, for she had been employed in setting every thing in order about the Dutchess, thinking she had that night good at least. *Helen*¹ at first called out to me, Madam, it is a boy. I told this to the Coadjutor, but when we came to examine a little nearer into matters, behold it was a girl ! We were a little disconcerted, and ashamed of ourselves, when we came to reflect, that we had been all the summer making *des beguins au saint Pere*,² as la Fontaine says, and that after all our great hopes, *La Signora met au monde une fille*. I assure you this has lowered our crests a little, and nothing comforts us but my daughter's being so perfectly well. She has had no milk-fever. Her daughter has been christened by the name of *Mary-Blanch*.³ The Coadjutor standing for Monsieur d'Arles,⁴ and

¹ One of Madame de Sevigne's women.

² See his Conte de l'Hermite.

³ The same who was afterwards one of the religious in the Dames de St. Marie d'Aix, and died there at the age of 62.

⁴ Francis Adhemar de Monteil, archbp. of Arles, commander of the king's orders, Uncle to M. de Grignon.

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I for myself. Here is a detail now that would be very disagreeable, was it about indifferent things, but one is fond to hear every little circumstance that relates to those we love. The premier President of Provence¹ came hither from St. Germain's purposely to make his compliments on the occasion. I never saw greater marks of a sincere friendship. But what have I yet to tell you? Dare I do it? I flatter myself that the knowledge of your dear wife being so perfectly well, will in some measure comfort you, but our amiable Dutchess de Saint Simon² lies so dangerously ill of the small-pox, that her life is despaired of. Adieu, my dear, I leave your poor heart to make something out of all these different sentiments. You know mine with regard to yourself long since. Malicious folks will have it, that Blanche d'Adhemar is not likely to be the greatest beauty in the world; and the same people add, that she very much resembles you: If that be the case, you will hardly doubt of my loving her dearly.

LETTER VII

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday 21 Nov. 1670.

YOU have a Letter from your dear wife. Well, after all, it is a mere folly to give one's self the trouble of writing to you! and it is only to let you

¹ Monsieur de Forbin d'Oppede.

² Diana Henrietta de Budos, Dutchess of St. Simon.

MARCHIONESS DE SEVIGNE

know that the Dutchess de St. Simon is entirely out of danger. That day I wrote to you she had received all the sacraments, and it was not expected that she could live over two days. Now you can, without interruption, enjoy all the pleasure the knowledge of my daughter's good health can afford you. She has just received a piece of news which is very agreeable to her ; she thought that young¹ Noirmoutier would have been blind : She had made many christian and moral reflections upon the occasion, and felt all the pity and concern so deplorable an accident could inspire ; when all on a sudden she received a message, acquainting her that he saw perfectly well, and that his poor eyes, which had been in a manner washed out of his head by a violent defluxion, had very luckily recovered their places again, as if nothing had been the matter : Upon this she desires to know what she is to do with her reflections ; and complains that they have broke in upon her chain of thoughts ; and are people of very little consideration to come with such news to her before the nine days were up ? In short, we have laughed so heartily at this oddity, that we were afraid she would have made herself sick with it.

Monsieur le Grand and Marshal Bellefond are to run next Monday in the wood of Boulogne, upon horses that out-strip the wind. The bet is no less than three thousand pistoles.

¹ Anthony Francis de la Tremoille, Duke de Noirmoutier.

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LETTER VIII

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday 28 Nov. 1670.

LET us have no more, I beseech you, about this woman, we love her beyond all bounds of reason. She is very well, and I now write to you wholly in my own name. I want to talk to you about Monsieur de Marseille,¹ to beg you, by all the confidence you have in me, to observe my advice in your conduct with respect to him. I know the manners of the Provencials, and the pleasure they take in fomenting divisions, insomuch that if one is not continually upon one's guard against the discourse of these gentry, one is insensibly led away to join in their sentiments, which are often very false and unjust. I can assure you that time, or some other reasons, have made a great alteration in Monsieur de Marseille's temper ; for some days past he has been very mild ; and, provided you are not resolved to treat him as an enemy, you will not find him one. Let us take him at his word, till we find he does something to contradict it ; nothing is so capable of overturning a good intention as to shew a diffidence of it ; it is often alone sufficient to be suspected for an enemy, to make a person become one in reality : The whole is then at an end, and there are no longer any measures to keep.

¹ Toussaint de Forbin Janson, Bishop of Marseille, afterwards Bishop and Count of Beauvais, Cardinal, and Grand Almoner of France.

Whereas confidence engages to good actions, one is agreeably affected with the good opinion of others, and cannot readily bring one's self to forfeit it. In God's name, open your heart, and you will perhaps be surprised by a behaviour that you at present little expect. I never can think this man conceals any rancour in his heart, under so many professions of friendship as he has made us, and of which we had better be the dupes, than entertain false or injurious suspicions. Follow my advice, it is not mine only ; several very able heads require this conduct from you, and give you assurances that you will not find yourself deceived. Your family is persuaded of it. We see better into these things than you, so many people who love you, and have some pretensions to good sense and discernment, cannot certainly be all of them mistaken.

I wrote you the other day that the premier president of Provence had come purposely on hearing of your wife's being brought to bed, to make her his compliments : Nothing can be more obliging, or shew a greater interest in what concerns you : we have seen him again to-day, and he spoke to us in the most frank and pretty manner in the world, about the affair that you have proposed to the assembly (*of the states of Provence*,) he told us, that you had orders sent you to call them together, and that he had wrote to you, to communicate his advice on the occasion, which we all thought very good. As there is no knowing men at first but by their words, one should always believe those till they contradict them by their actions : One finds sometimes that those we have taken for enemies

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are not such ; in which case one is heartily ashamed of having been so mistaken. It is sufficient to be always ready to hate where one has occasion for so doing. Adieu, my dear Count, I have reason on my side, which makes me so troublesome.

Madame de Coulanges¹ writes me word, that you love me : 'Tho' this is no great piece of news to me, yet I think I have reason to be pleased, that your friendship for me can resist absence, and Provence, and be ready to shew itself on all occasions.

I heartily thank you for your goodness to ***. I have received a great many thanks on the occasion. The King has had compassion on him ; he no longer remains chained in the gallies,² but is at his liberty, and lives comfortably in Marseilles. One cannot too much applaud his Majesty for this act of goodness and justice.

LETTER IX

TO THE SAME

Paris, Wednesday 3 Dec. 1670.

ALAS ! is it for me then to acquaint you with the death of the Dutchess of St. Simon ? who after lying eighteen days with the small-pox, sometimes better, sometimes at death's door, at length died yesterday, and by her death has left every-body in the greatest affliction, for the loss of so amiable a person. As for me, I am affected with it to the

¹ Mad. de Coulanges, was at that time at Lyons.

² See Letter II.

last degree. You know the great regard I always had for her ; if you had the same, this melancholy news must give you concern.

And now I must acquaint you, that Father Bourdaloue preaches divinely well at court. We were much mistaken in thinking that he would not make any figure out of a tennis-court ; he infinitely surpasses every thing that we have heard of him.

Adieu, my dearest Count, your brother has preached lately, and has met with a general and unfeigned approbation.

LETTER X

TO THE SAME

Paris, Wednesday 10 Dec. 1670.

MADAME de Coulanges has told me several times, that you love me sincerely, that you talk of me, that you wish me with you. As I made the first advances towards this friendship, and woo'd you the first, you may judge how happy I am to find that you return the inclination I have so long had for you. All that you write about your daughter is admirable. I made no doubt that the good health of mine would comfort you for your disappointment. The joy I should have had in acquainting you with the birth of a son, would have been too great, it would have been too much good fortune at a time ; and the pleasure I naturally take in being the messenger of good news, would have been carried to an excess. I shall soon be in the

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same condition you saw me in last year, I must love you very well to be capable of sending my daughter to you this time of the year, when the weather is so bad. What a foolish thing it is to leave a good mother, with whom you assure me she is very well contented, to run after a man at the very farthest end of France ! I give you my word, nothing can be more ill-bred than such a behaviour. I do believe you was greatly concerned at the death of the amiable Dutchess. I was so afflicted myself, that I stood in need of being comforted while I was writing to you about it.

My daughter desires me to acquaint you with the marriage of Monsieur de Nevers¹ ; that Monsieur de Nevers, who was so difficult to be chained, that Monsieur de Nevers, who used to slip thro' the womens hands, when they least thought of it, is at length going to wed. Whom ? guess. Not Mademoiselle d'Houdancourt, nor yet Mademoiselle de Grancei, it is the young, the handsome, the modest Mademoiselle de Thianges,² who was brought up at the Abbaye aux Bois. Madame de Montespan³ has the wedding solemnized next Sunday ; she acts as mother on the occasion, and receives the honours as such. The King restored Monsieur de Nevers to all his posts, so that this *Belle*, tho' she does not bring him a penny of fortune, will be worth more to him than the richest heiress

¹ Philip-Julian Mazarini Mancini, Duke of Nevers.

² Diana-Gabriel de Damas, daughter of Claud-Leonor, Marquis de Thianges, and Gabriel de Rochechouart Mortemar, sister to Madame de Montespan.

³ Then mistress to Louis xiv.

in France. Madame de Montespan does wonders in every thing. I forbid you to write to me : Write to my daughter, and leave me to the freedom of writing to you, without embarking you in a train of answers, which would prevent the pleasure I have in acquainting you with every little trifle. Continue to love me, my dear Count, I dispense with your honouring my motherly dignity, but you must love me ; and assure yourself that there is not a place in the world where you are so dearly beloved as you are here.

Do not fail writing to Madame de Brissac.¹ I saw her yesterday ; she is in a great deal of affliction : She was mentioning the concern she imagined you would be in at hearing of her mother's death.

Monsieur de Foix is sometimes at death's door, sometimes a little better ; I would not answer for the lives of those that have the small-pox this year.

There is a young son of the Land-grave of Hesse here, who is just dead of a continual fever, for want of being bled. His Lady mother charged him, when she went away, not to suffer himself to be bled by any one at Paris. He would not be bled ; and so he died.

Noirmoutier is irrecoverably blind ; Madame de Grignan's old reflections may now come into play again. The court is here, and the King is so heartily tired of it, that he intends going to Versailles three or four times at least every week.

The Mareschal de la Ferte says the most unaccountable things ! It was but the other day that

¹ Gabrielle-Louisa de St. Simon, Dutchess de Brissac, daughter of Claud, Duke de St. Simon, and of Henrietta de Budos.

LETTERS OF THE

he presented the Count de St. Paul,¹ and *le petit bon*² to his lady, as two young people very proper to be introduced to the ladies. He made the Count de St. Paul some reproaches for having been so long without coming to see him. The Count made answer, that he had been several times at his house, and that he supposed his servants had not acquainted him with it.

LETTER XI

TO MR. DE COULANGES

Paris, Monday 15 Dec. 1670.

I AM going to tell you a thing that is the most astonishing, the most surprising, the most marvellous, the most miraculous, the most supreme, the most confounding, the most unheard, the most singular, the most extraordinary, the most incredible, the most unforeseen, the greatest, the least, the rarest, the most common, the most public, the most private, till to-day ; the most brilliant, the most to be envied ; in short, a thing of which there has been but one example for ages past, and that not a just one neither ; a thing that we cannot believe at Paris ; how then will it gain credit at Lyons ? A thing which makes every-body cry, Lord have mercy upon us ! a thing which causes the greatest joy to Madame de Rohan and Madame de Hauteville ; a thing, in fine, which will be done on Sunday

¹ Afterwards Duke de Longueville.

² Or, the little good body, a name given to the Count de Fiesque.

next, when those who are present at it will think they see double. A thing which will be done on Sunday, and yet perhaps not finished on Monday. I cannot bring myself to tell it to you : Can't you guess ? I give you three times to do it in. What, not a Word to throw at a Dog ? Well then, I find I must tell you. Monsieur de Lauzun¹ is to be married next Sunday at the Louvre, to —— guess whom ! I give you four times to do it in, I give you six, I give you an hundred. Says Madame de Coulanges, it is really very hard to guess. Perhaps it is Madame de la Valiere : Indeed, Madam, it is not. It is Mademoiselle de Retz, then : No, nor yet her, you are violently provincial. Lord bless me, say you, what stupid wretches we are ; it is Mademoiselle de Colbert all the while. Nay, now you are still further from the mark. Why then it must certainly be Mademoiselle de Crequy : You have it not yet. Well, I find I must tell you at last : He is to be married next Sunday, at the Louvre, with the King's leave, to Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle de . . . Mademoiselle —— guess her name : He marries Mademoiselle, the great Mademoiselle ; Mademoiselle daughter to the late MONSIEUR.² Mademoiselle grand-daughter of HENRY the IVth, Mademoiselle d'Eu, Mademoiselle de Dombes, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, Mademoiselle d'Orleans, Mademoiselle the King's cousin-german, Mademoiselle destined to the throne, Mademoiselle, the only match that was worthy of MONSIEUR.

¹ Antoninus Nompar de Caumont, Marquis de Puiguilhem, afterwards Duke de Lauzun.

² Gaston of France, Duke of Orleans, brother to Louis XIII.

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Here is glorious matter for talk. If you should cry out, if you are beside yourselves, if you say we have told you a lye, that it's all false, that we are making a jest of you, that it is a very pretty joke indeed ! that the invention is dull, flat ; in short, if you abuse us, we shall think you are quite in the right ; for we have done just the same ourselves. Farewell, you will find from the Letters you receive this post, whether we tell you truth, or not.

LETTER XII

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday 19 Dec. 1670.

WHAT is called falling from the clouds, or from a pinnacle, happened last night at the Thuilleries ; but I must take things farther back. You have already shared in the joy, the transport, and ecstasies of the princess and her happy lover. It was just as I told you, the affair was made public on Monday. Tuesday was passed in talking, astonishment, and compliments. Wednesday Mademoiselle made a deed of gift to Monsieur de Lauzun, investing him with certain titles, names, and dignities, necessary to be inserted in the marriage-contract, which was drawn up that day. She gave him then, till she could give him something better, four Dutchies ; the first was that of Count d'Eu, which entitles him to rank as first peer of France, the Dukedom of Montpensier, which

title he bore all that day ; the Dukedom de Saint Fargeau, and the Dukedom de Chatellerault, the whole valued at twenty-two millions of livres. The contract was then drawn up, and he took the name of Montpensier. Thursday morning, which was yesterday, Mademoiselle was in expectation of the King's signing the contract, as he had said he would ; but, about seven o'clock in the evening, the Queen, Monsieur, and several old dotards that were about him, had so persuaded his Majesty, that his reputation would suffer in this affair, that after sending for Mademoiselle and Monsieur de Lauzun into his presence, he declared to them, before the Prince, that he absolutely forbid them to think any further about this marriage. Monsieur de Lauzun received this order with all the respect, all the submission, all the firmness, and, at the same time, all the despair, that could be expected in so great a reverse of fortune. As for Mademoiselle, being under no restraint, she gave a loose to herself, and burst forth into tears, cries, lamentations, and the most violent expressions of grief ; she keeps her bed all day long, and takes nothing within her lips but a little broth. What a fine dream is here ! what a glorious subject for a tragedy, or a romance, but especially for an eternity of talk and reasoning ! This is what we do day and night, morning and evening, without end or ceasing ; we hope you do the like, *E fra tanto vi baccio le mani.*

LETTER XIII

TO THE SAME

Paris, Wednesday 24 Dec. 1670.

YOU are now perfectly well acquainted with the romantick story of Mademoiselle and of Monsieur de Lauzun. It is exactly a story, a proper story for a tragedy, in the rules of the theatre ; we laid out the acts and scenes the other days. We only took four days instead of four and twenty hours, and the piece was compleat. Never was such a change seen in so short a time, never was there known so general an emotion : You certainly never received so extraordinary a piece of news before. M. de Lauzun behaved admirably well ; he supported his misfortune with such courage and intrepidity, and at the same time shewed so deep a sorrow, mixed with such profound respect, that have made him the admiration of every-body. His loss is doubtless invaluable, but then the King's favour, which he has by this means preserved, is likewise invaluable ; so that upon the whole, his condition does not seem so very deplorable. Mademoiselle has behaved extremely well on her side. She has cried very heartily ; but yesterday, for the first time, she returned to pay her duty at the Louvre, after having received the visits of every one there : so now the affair is all over. Adieu.

LETTER XIV

TO THE SAME

Paris, Wednesday 31 Dec. 1670.

I HAVE received your answers to my Letters. I perfectly well conceive the astonishment you was in at what passed between the 15th and 20th of this month, the subject called for it all. I admire likewise your good sense, and the excellent judgment you formed of that affair, in imagining so great a machine could never support itself from Monday to Sunday. Modesty prevents my launching out in your praise on this head, because I myself said and thought the very same thing as you did. I told my daughter on Monday, this will never go on as it should do till Sunday ; I'll wager, that notwithstanding this wedding seems so sure, it will never come to a conclusion. In effect, the sky was overcast on Thursday morning, and about ten o'clock, as I told you, the cloud burst. That very same day I went about nine in the morning to Mademoiselle's, having been informed that she was to go out of town to be married, and that the Coadjutor of Rheims¹ was to perform the ceremony : These were the resolves on Wednesday night, but matters had been determined otherwise at the Louvre ever since Tuesday. Mademoiselle was writing, she made me place myself on my knees at her bed-side, she told me to whom she was writing, and upon what, and also of the fine presents

¹ Charles Maurice le Tellier.

she had made the night before, and the titles she had conferred ; and that as there was no match in any of the courts of Europe for her, she was resolved to provide herself. She related to me, word for word, a conversation she had with the King, and appeared quite transported with joy, to think how happy she should make a man of merit. She mentioned, with a great deal of tenderness, the worth and gratitude of M. de Lauzun : To all which I made her this answer : “ On my word, Mademoiselle, your highness seems quite happy ! but why was not this affair finished at once, last Monday ? Don’t you conceive that this delay gives time and opportunity to the whole kingdom to talk, and that it is absolutely tempting God, and the King, by protracting an affair of so extraordinary a nature as this is ? ” She allowed me to be in the right, but was so secure of success, that what I said made little or no impression on her at that time. She repeated the many amiable qualities of Monsieur de Lauzun, and the noble house he was descended from. To which I replied in these two lines of Polyeuctes¹ :

“ Je ne la puis du moins blamer d’un mauvais choix ;
Polyeucte a du nom, & sort du sang des Rois.”

Upon which she embraced me very heartily. Our conversation lasted above an hour : It is impossible to repeat all that passed between us, but I may without vanity say, that my company was highly agreeable to her at that time, for her heart was so full that she was glad of any one to unburthen it to.

¹ A tragedy of M. Corneille’s.

MARCHIONESS DE SEVIGNE

At ten o'clock she gave herself to the rest of France, who crouded to pay their compliments to her. She waited all the morning for news from court, but none came. All the afternoon she amused herself with putting M. de Montpensier's apartment in order, which she did with her own hands. You know what happened at night. The next morning, which was Friday, I waited upon her, and found her in bed, her grief redoubled at sight of me, she called me to her, embraced me, and wetted me all over with her tears. Ah ! said she, do you remember what you said to me yesterday ? What a cruel foresight was that of yours ! Ah ! what a foresight ! In short she made me weep to see her weep so violently. I have seen her twice since, she still continues in great affliction, but always behaves to me as to a person that sympathised with her in her distress ; in which she is not mistaken. For I really feel sentiments for her that are seldom felt for people of such superior rank. This between us two and Madame de Coulanges ; for you are sensible that all this tittle-tattle would appear ridiculous to others.

LETTER XV

TO MONSIEUR DE GRIGNAN

Paris, Friday 16 Jan. 1671.

ALAS ! the poor dear child is with me still, for it was utterly impossible for her, do what she would, to have set out the 10th of this month, as she all along hoped and intended to do. The rains

have been, and are yet, so very violent, that it would have been downright folly to have attempted it. The rivers are overflowed ; the roads are all under water ; and the tracks so covered that she would have run the risque of being over-turned in every pool. In short, things are at such a pass that Madame de Rochefort, who is at her country seat, and is just wild to be in Paris, where she is expected with the greatest impatience by her husband and mother, does not dare to venture upon the roads till they are a little safer : And indeed this winter is perfectly dreadful. We have not had an hour's frost, but a continual deluge of rain every day. Not a boat can pass any of the bridges, the arches of the Pont Neuf are in a manner choaked up. In short, it is something more than common. I must own to you, that seeing the season so excessively bad, I did oppose her setting out for some days. I do not pretend to stop her, for fear of the cold, or the dirt, or the fatigues of the journey ; but methinks I would not have her drowned. Yet, strong as the reasons are for her stay, nothing could have prevailed on her had not the Coadjutor, who is to go with her, been engaged to perform the marriage ceremony of his cousin d'Harcourt¹ ; which is to be solemnized at the Louvre ; Monsieur de Leonne is to stand proxy. The King has talked to him, I mean the Coadjutor, about this affair ; it has been put off from day to day, and may not be finished perhaps this week. My poor daughter is in such

¹ Mary, Angelica Henrietta of Lorraine, married the 7th Feb. 1671, to Nugno Alvares Pereira de Mello, Duke of Cadaval in Portugal.

violent impatience to be gone, that the time she passes with us now cannot be called living ; and if the Coadjutor does not disengage himself from this same wedding, I think I see her ready to commit a great piece of folly, which is that of going without him. It would be a very extraordinary thing for her to go by herself, and then it is so happy for her that she has a brother-in-law to accompany her, that I shall do all in my power to prevent their separation. In the mean time too, the waters may be a little drained off. But I can assure you that I have no sort of joy in her company now ; I know she must leave us ; all that passes now is mere matters of ceremony and preparation ; we make no parties, we take no pleasure, our hearts are always heavy, and we talk of nothing but rains, bad roads, and dreadful stories of people who have lost their lives in attempting to pass them. In a word, tho' I love her to the degree you are sensible of, yet our present condition is really insupportably disagreeable. These few last days have passed without the least satisfaction. I am infinitely obliged to you, my dear Count, for all the kindness and compassion you have for me. You can, better than any other, judge of what I now suffer, and what I am likely to suffer. But I should be sorry that the joy you will have in seeing her should be damped by any reflections of that sort. Such are the changes and vexations with which this life is chequered ! Adieu, my dearest Count, I destroy you with the length of my letters ; but I flatter myself you know from what source they spring.

LETTER XVI

TO MADAME DE GRIGNAN

Paris, Friday 6 Feb. 1671.

MY affliction must be much lighter than it is, were I capable of giving you a description of it. I shall therefore not attempt it. In vain I search every where for my dear child, I see her no more ! and every step she takes carries her yet farther from me ! I returned to Saint Mary's half dead, and weeping all the way ; I thought my heart and soul had been torn from me : Good God ! how cruel a separation is this ! I begged to be alone, they carried me into Madame Houffet's apartment, where they made a fire : *Agnes* stayed with me, but without speaking a word, for that was our agreement. I passed five whole hours in that manner, without ceasing to sigh and sob : every thought brought death with it. I wrote to M. de Grignan, you may easily guess in what style. Then I went to Madame de la Fayette's, who renewed my sorrows afresh, by the interest she took in them. She was all alone, and out of order, being in a good deal of concern for the death of a sister : She was just in such a situation as I could have wished her. Monsieur de la Rochefoucault came in ; they talked to me of nothing but you, how much reason I had to be concerned, and of their intending to speak in a proper manner to *Mellusina*.¹ You may take my

¹ Madame de Marans, sister to Mademoiselle de Montalais, maid of honour and chief favourite to the Princess Henrietta of England.

word that she will have it pretty smartly, d'Hacqueville will give you a full account of the whole affair. Well ! about eight o'clock I came home, but, good God ! think what I felt in coming up stairs ! That room which I used to enter with such pleasure, was open to me indeed, but I found every thing in it desolate and disordered, and your sweet little girl there, who put me so in mind of my own. Think only what I suffered ! the night passed in mournful vigils, and the returning light found me not a whit more advanced in peace of mind. That afternoon I passed with Madame de la Troche ¹ at the Arsenal. In the evening I received your letters, which threw me back again into my first transports : I shall finish what I am now writing this evening at M. de Coulanges', where I shall pick up some news for you : This I know, that from the concern you have left every one in behind you, I might, if I would, fill my letter with nothing but compliments.

Friday Night

The news that I am now about to impart to you, I learned at Madame de Lavardin's. Madame de la Fayette told me, that she and M. de la R. F. had yesterday a conversation with *Mellusina*, the particulars of which cannot easily be committed to writing : But you may suppose that she was very much confounded at the consciousness of her horrid

¹ N . . . de Varennes, widow of the Marquis de la Troche, of the house of Savoniere in Anjou. She had a son a Mareschal de Camp, who was killed the 18 September 1691, at the battle of Leuze ; and was an officer of great merit.

behaviour, which was laid open to her without the least reserve. She thinks herself very happy in the terms that are offered her, and very readily came into them ; which are, that she shall for the future observe a strict silence, and on those conditions no more will be said to her on this affair. You have friends here that interested themselves in the warmest manner in your behalf : I find not one that has not a very great love and esteem for you, and readily sympathize with me in my grief. I have not as yet been any where but at Madame de la Fayette's. All our friends strive to find me out, and get me along with them, which I dread like death. I entreat you, my dear child, to take care of your health ; preserve it for my sake, and do not give way to those negligences which are so seldom got the better of. I embrace you with a tenderness that is not to be equalled ; no offence to the most tender.

The marriage articles between Mademoiselle d'Houdancourt and Monsieur de Ventadour were signed this morning. The Abbe de Chambonnas was this morning likewise nominated to the Bishoprick of Lodeve. The Princess¹ will set out on Ash-Wednesday for Chateauroux, where the Prince is desirous she should make some stay. M. de la Marguerie succeeds M. d'Estampes, who is dead, in his place in the council. Madame de Mazarin comes to Paris this night ; the King has declared himself her protector, and has sent a grand equipage with an exempt and eight men, to bring her up from Lis.

¹ Clara Clementina de Maille Breze, Princess of Conde.

MARCHIONESS DE SEVIGNE

I am now going to tell you a piece of ingratitude that will not displease you, and of which I intend to make a good use when I write my book upon ingratitude. Marshal d'Albret has detected Madame d'H not only in a piece of gallantry with Monsieur de Bethune, which he would hitherto never credit, but likewise in having said the worst things imaginable of Madame Scarron and him. She has endeavoured to do them both all the ill offices that were in her power, and this has been so clearly proved, that Madame Scarron and all the Richlieu family are determined to see her no more. Here is a poor woman fallen indeed ! but however she has this consolation, that she did not bring it upon herself.

LETTER XVII

TO THE SAME

Paris, Monday 9 Feb. 1671.

I RECEIVE your letters in the same manner that you received my ring ; I am dissolved in tears while I am reading them. My heart seems ready to burst asunder ; people would think, to see me, that you had treated me ill in your letters, or were sick, or that some accident had happened to you, whereas it is quite the contrary : You love me, my dear child, you love me, and you tell it me in such a manner that I cannot refrain from a flood of tears. You continue your journey, I find, without any disagreeable accident. To know this, is just the thing in the world that I could the most desire, and

yet am I in this condition ! You do then take a pleasure in thinking of me ? in talking of me ? and, as you say, have a greater satisfaction in writing your sentiments to me than in telling them ? In whatever way they come, they meet with a reception the warmth of which can be only known to those who love as I do. You make me experience the greatest degree of tenderness for you that is possible to be felt. And if you think of me, be assured that I, on my side, am continually thinking of you : This is what the Devotees call an habitual thought ; and is such as we ought to have for the Divine Being, were we to do our duty. Nothing is capable of taking me off from it. I see your coach continually driving on, but never, never to come nearer to me ; I fancy myself on the road, and am always in apprehensions of the coach overturning. I am just distracted about the violent rains we have had these three days past ; and I am frightened to death at the thoughts of the Rhone. I have this instant a map before me, I know every place you lie at. To-night you are at Nevers, Sunday you will be at Lyons, where you will receive this letter. I could but write to you at Moulins by Madame de Guene-gaud. I have had but two letters from you ; perhaps a third will come ; that is all the comfort I desire. I ask for no other. I am utterly incapable of seeing a great deal of company together, I may come to it again in time, perhaps, but it is out of the question now. The Dutchesses of Verneciel and Arpajon have used all their endeavours to divert me, for which I am much obliged to them : Never sure were there better people than in this country.

MARCHIONESS DE SEVIGNE

Saturday I was all the day at Madame de Villars,¹ talking about you, and crying ; she takes a great share in my concern. Yesterday I was to hear Monsieur d'Agen² preach, and at Madame de Puisieux and Madame du Pui-du-Fou's, who both send you a thousand services. This evening I shall sup *tete a tete*³ in the Fauxbourgs. These are my carnivals. I have a mass said for you every day. This is no superstitious piece of devotion. I saw Adhemar⁴ but for a moment ; I am going to write to him, and thank him for his bed. I am more obliged to him for it than you. If you have a mind to do me a real pleasure, take care of your health, sleep in that little snug bed, eat broth, and exert that courage which I want. Continue to write to me. Whatever friendships you left behind you here, are all increased, and I should never have

¹ Marie de Bellfond, Marchioness of Villars, mother to the late Marshal of that name.

² Claude Joli, a celebrated preacher, afterwards Bishop of Agen.

³ With Madame de la Fayette.

⁴ Joseph Adhemar de Monteil, brother to M. de Grignan, known at first by the name of Adhemar, was after the death of Charles Philip d'Adhemar his brother, which happened the 6th of February 1627, called the Chevalier de Grignan ; but being afterwards married to N . . . d'Oraison, he resumed the name of Count Adhemar. In 1675 he was Mestre de Camp to a regiment of horse, at the head of which he signalized himself on several occasions, particularly at the battle of Altemheim. He was made Mareschal de Camp in 1688 : and had not repeated attacks of the gout prevented him from continuing in the service, he would doubtless, from his great reputation, merit, and illustrious birth, have obtained the most considerable military honours. He died without issue the 19th November 1713, at the age of sixty-nine.

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done making you compliments, and telling you how much every one is concerned about your health.

Mademoiselle d'Harcourt was married the day before yesterday ; there was a grand supper *en maigre* given to the whole family : Yesterday there was a grand ball, and at night a supper for the King and Queen, and all the ladies of the court, who were extremely brilliant on the occasion ; it was one of the most splendid entertainments that could possibly be seen.

Madame d'H is departed in the greatest despair, having lost all her friends, and being fully convicted of what Madam Scarron had so long defended her against, and in short every piece of treachery imaginable. Let me know when you have received my letters. I shall seal this presently.

Monday Night

I am making up my packet before I go to the Fauxbourgs, and shall direct it to the Intendant of Lyons. I am charmed with the distinction you observe in your letters with respect to me. Ah, my dear, I well deserve it from the distinction of my love to you.

I will now tell you what I learned concerning the entertainment yesterday : The court-yards belonging to the Hotel de Guise were illuminated with upwards of 2000 lanterns. The Queen went first of all into the apartment of Madame de Guise, which was illuminated and set forth in a most sumptuous manner ; the ladies of the court were all ranged round her Majesty on their knees,

without any distinction of rank : Supper was served up in that apartment. There were forty ladies at table, the supper was very magnificent : the King came in, and looked very gravely round him, without sitting down to table. After supper the company went into an upper apartment, where every thing was prepared for the ball. The King took out the Queen, and honoured the assembly by dancing three or four courants, and then retired to the Louvre with his usual attendants. Mademoiselle would not come to the Hotel Guise. This is all I know about the affair.

I am resolved to see the country fellow from Sulli, that brought me your letter yesterday. I intend to give him something to drink. I look on him as a happy creature in having seen you. Ah, what would I give could I see you but for a moment ! I form *Dragons*¹ to myself as well as other people ! Dirval² has heard talk of *Melusina* ; he says it's no matter, that he told you of the jests she made of you at your first lying-in, but that you would not hear a word of it ; from which time he never came near you. That creature has spoke ill of you for a long time, but nothing would persuade you of it but your own eyes. And our Coadjutor too, will you not make much of him for my sake ? Do you not yet find him to be *Seignor Corbeau* ? I earnestly wish to see you friends again. Ah, my dear child, for God's sake, tell me, are you taken a great deal of care of ? But there is no believing you in what

¹ A familiar expression between the mother and daughter, to signify vexatious or uneasy reflections.

² The Count d'Avaux.

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relates to your health. You would not make use of this bed. This is just like not letting me send for Madame Robinett. Adieu, my dearest child ! the only joy and anxiety of my life.

LETTER XVIII

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday 11 Feb. 1671.

I HAVE received but three of those delightful letters which so affect my heart. One is yet wanting. Was I not so fond of them, and that I am loth to lose any thing that you send me, I should not think I had lost much ; for nothing can be wished for beyond what I find in those I have already received : In the first place, they are well wrote, and are besides so tender, so natural, that it is impossible not to believe every thing in them ; distrust itself must here stand convinced : They wear that air of truth which, as I have always maintained, carries its authority with it ; while falsehood and lies skulk under a load of words, without having the power of persuasion ; the more they attempt to shew themselves, the more are they entangled. Your expressions are sincere, and they appear so ; they are used only to explain your meaning, and receive an irresistible force from their noble simplicity. Such, my dear child, do your letters appear to me. If my words have the same power as yours, I am confident the truths they convey must have had their usual effect with you. I will

not have you say, that I was a curtain that concealed you ; so much the worse if I concealed you ; you appear still more amiable now that curtain is drawn ; you require to be discovered to appear in your true perfection. This is what we have said a thousand times of you. As for me, I appear to myself quite naked, and divested of every thing that made me amiable : I am ashamed to appear in the world ; and notwithstanding the endeavours that have been used to bring me back to it, I have latterly been like one just come out of the woods, I could not be otherwise. Few are worthy of feeling what I feel ; I have sought those chosen few, and avoided all others. I have seen Guitaut and his wife, they have a great regard for you, write me a word or two for them. Two or three of the Grignans came to see me to-day. I have given Adhemar a thousand thanks for lending you his bed : We did not pretend to examine how far it might have been his interest to have disturbed your quiet rather than to have contributed to it, we had not spirits to carry the joke any farther, but were very happy that the bed had proved so good. I fancy you are at Moulins to-day, if so, you will receive one of my letters. I did not write to you at Briafre, I must have wrote that cruel Wednesday, that very day you set off ; and I was so overwhelmed with grief, that I was incapable even of tasting the consolation of writing to you. This is the third, my second is at Lyons. Be sure you let me know if you have received them. When one is at a distance, one no longer laughs at a letter beginning with, *I received yours*, &c. The thought of your going always farther and farther

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from me, and of seeing the coach continually driving on, is what gives me the greatest vexation. You are always going on, and at last, as you say, you will find yourself at two hundred leagues distance from me ; resolved therefore not to suffer such injustice without repaying it in my turn, I shall set myself about removing farther off too, and shall do it so effectually that I will make it three hundred. A very pretty distance you 'll say ! And would it not be a step highly worthy the love I have for you, to undertake to traverse all France to find you out. I am glad of the reunion of hearts between you and the Co-adjutor ; you know how necessary I always thought it to the happiness of your life. Preserve this treasure with care : You allow yourself charmed with his goodness, let him see you are not ungrateful. I shall soon finish my letter ; perhaps when you get to Lyons you will be so giddy with the honours you will receive there, that you will not find time to read all this ; however, find enough, I beseech you, to let me hear about you, and whether you embark upon that devilish Rhone.

Wednesday Night

I have just this moment received yours from Nogent, it was given me by a very honest man, whom I questioned as much as I could ; but your letter is worth more than can be said. It was but justice, my dear, that you should be the first to make me smile, after having caused me so many tears. What you tell me of Monsieur *Busche* is quite original ; it is what you call a stroke in the oratorial

style. I did laugh then, I own it to you, and I should be ashamed of it, had I done any thing else than cry for this week past. I met him in the street, this same Monsieur *Busche*, when he was bringing your horses for you to set out ; I stopped him, and all in tears asked him his name ; which he told me. Monsieur *Busche*, says I sobbing all the while, I recommend my daughter to your care, dear Monsieur *Busche* don't overturn her, and when you have carried her safely to Lyons, if you will call upon me with that agreeable news, I will give you something to drink : I will therefore certainly do it. What you say about him has greatly added to the respect I had for him before. But you are not well, you have not slept lately : Chocolate will do you good ; but then you have no chocolate-pot : I have thought of that twenty times ; what will you do ? Ah, my dear child, you are not mistaken in thinking my mind is always employed about you : If you was to see me, you would see me continually seeking those who love to talk of you ; if you was to hear me, it would be continually talking of you myself. I have not yet seen any of those who want to divert me, that is, in other words, who want to hinder my thinking of you, for I am angry with them for it. Farewell, my lovely child, continue to write to me, and to love me.

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LETTER XIX

TO THE SAME

Paris, Thursday 12 Feb. 1671.

THIS is only a kind of letter of precaution, for I shall not write to you till to-morrow ; but I want to let you know at present what I have just heard.

Yesterday the President Amelot, after having made a great number of visits, towards night found himself a good deal out of order, and was soon after seized with a violent apoplectic fit, of which he expired about eight o'clock this morning. I would have you write to his wife ; the whole family are in great affliction.

The Dutchess de la Valiere sent a message to the king, besides the letter which has not yet been seen, by the Marshal de Bellefond, " That she should have quitted the court much sooner, after having lost the honour of his good graces, had she been able to prevail with herself to see him no more ; but that her weakness on that head was so great, that she was scarce capable of making a sacrifice of it to God ; but that she was resolved the remains of that passion she had had for him should make part of her penance, and that as she had devoted her youth to him, it could not be thought much if the rest of her life was spent in cares for her own salvation." The king wept bitterly, and sent Monsieur Colbert to Chaillot, to beg her to come directly to Versailles, that he might speak to her once

more. Monsieur Colbert accordingly conducted her thither. The king had a whole hour's conversation with her, and wept a great deal. Madame de Montespan, all in tears, ran with open arms to receive her. We do not rightly understand all this. Some say she will remain at Versailles, and continue about the court, others that she will return to Chaillot : We shall see.

LETTER XX

TO THE SAME

Friday, 13 Feb. 1671.

From Monsieur de Coulanges's house.

MONSIEUR de Coulanges will have me write to you once more at Lyons : I conjure you, my dear child, if you think of taking boat to go down to the Pont du St. Esprit, have pity on me, and take care of yourself. You have so thoroughly convinced me of the love you have for me, that I think, out of regard to my ease, you will not hazard your own safety. Pray let me know particularly how you conduct your bark. Ah, how dear, how precious to me is that little bark, which the Rhone so cruelly carries away from me ! I hear there have been fine doings, but it is only by hearsay, for I did not see it. I have been so unsociable that I could not bear four people at a time in a room. I was in the chimney-corner at Madame de la Fayette's. *Melusina's* affair is in the hands of Langlade,¹

¹ A person particularly attached to the house of Bouillon, and who was afterwards made secretary to the cabinet.

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after having passed thro' those of Monsieur de la R. F. and d'Hacqueville. I assure you she is very much confounded, and thoroughly despised by all who have the honour to know her. I have not seen Madame d'Arpajon yet : I am vexed to see her look so contented and happy. It was thought that the ball on Shrove Tuesday would have been put off ; never was so universal a dullness. I believe your absence occasioned it. Good God, what a number of compliments have I to make you ! how many good wishes ! how many longings to hear from you ! what praises bestowed on you ! I should never have done was I to name all the good people, male and female, by whom you are loved, and esteemed, and adored ; but when you have put them all together, be assured, my dear child, they feel nothing in comparison of what I feel for you. I never lose sight of you a moment, I think on you incessantly, and in such a manner ! I embraced your little girl, and she kissed me again ; and kissed your part extremely well. Do you know that I love the little creature, when I think to whom she belongs ?

LETTER XXI

TO THE SAME

Paris, Wednesday 18 Feb. 1671.

I ENTREAT you, child, to preserve your eyes ; as for mine, you know they should be expended in your service. You know very well, my dearest, that in the manner you write, there is no reading

your letters without tears. To the natural tenderness and affection I have for you, join the one little circumstance of my being persuaded that you love me with equal warmth, and judge what must be my feelings. Wicked girl ! why do you sometimes conceal from me the precious treasures you are mistress of ? Are you afraid I should die with excess of joy ? Ought you not rather to be afraid I should die with concern, lest I should ever see it otherwise ? D'Hacqueville will witness for me the deplorable condition he once saw me in ; but let me quit these melancholy reflections, and enjoy a blessing without which life would be heavy and insupportable. These are not words but truths. Madame de Guenegaud has told me of the condition she saw you in on my account, retain the cause, I conjure you, but let us have no more tears, they are not so healthy for you as for me. I am now grown pretty reasonable ! I keep up upon occasion, and am sometimes for four or five hours together like another person, but a small matter makes me relapse, a remembrance, a place, a word, a thought half smothered, but especially a letter from you, or even one of my own while I am writing, or any one that speaks of you, these are the rocks and quicksands of my fortitude, and they very frequently fall in the way. I see Madame de Villars frequently, I am fond of being with her, because she enters into my sentiments ; she sends a thousand good wishes to you. Madame de la Fayette is very sensible too of the fondness I have for you ; and greatly touched with the regard you shew towards me. I have seen poor Madame d'Amelot too, she

weeps well, I am an excellent judge of weeping. I go to hear Mascaron¹ and Bourdaloue preach, they seem to strive who shall surpass each other. Well, I think I have sent you a great deal of news, I long to hear some from you, and how you find yourself at Lyons : To say the truth, I think on no one thing else. You have put me upon informing myself about the Masquerade on Shrove Tuesday ; I heard say that a great man, greater by some inches than any other man, had ordered a remarkable dress to be made up for him, and when all came to all, he would not wear it ; and it happened by chance that a lady he knew nothing of, and to whom he never spoke a word in his life, was met at the assembly : And now I must tell you with Voiture, that your absence has been the death of no one as yet, except myself ; not but that the carnival has been excessively dull, you may take the honour of it, if you please ; for my part, I thought it was upon your account ; only that it did not appear enough so for the absence of one like you. This letter I send for the first to Provence. I embrace Monsieur de Grignan, and die with impatience to hear from you. As soon as I receive one letter I am instantly for having another, I only breathe while I am receiving them.

You tell me wonders of the tomb of Monsieur de Montmorenci, and the beauty of the Mesdemoiselles de Valancai. You write extremely well, no one better ; never leave the natural, you have an exact turn for it, and that forms a compleat style. I have made your compliments to Madame de la

¹ Julius Mascaron, priest of the oratory, nominated in 1671 to the Bishoprick of Tulle.

Fayette, and to Monsieur de la Rochefoucault and Langlade ; they all love and esteem you, and would be ready to serve you on every occasion. I think your songs very pretty, I knew the style perfectly. Ah, my dear child, how I long to see you for a while, to hear you speak, to embrace you, nay, to see you pass by me only, if the rest is too much for me to ask ! Here now is one of those thoughts which I never attempt to suppress. I begin to grow quite weary of being without you, I feel the uneasiness of mind this separation gives me, in the same manner as I should a disease of the body. I cannot sufficiently thank you for the number of letters you have wrote me on the road : These little attentions are greatly pleasing, and have their full effect, I assure you : Nothing of this kind is lost upon me, it can proceed only from real friendship, or it would be much more agreeable to go to bed, and take one's rest. I am under no small impatience to hear from you, both from Rouen and Lyons : I am very uneasy about your taking water, and to know how the furious Rhone appeared to you, in comparison of our peaceable Loire, which you have so honoured with your civilities ! How kind it is of you to remember it as one of your old friends ! Alas ! what is it I do not remember ? The least trifles are of the greatest value to me ! I have a thousand *Dragons* ! How are things altered ! I never used to return hither but with the greatest impatience and pleasure ; and now I may look as long as I will, I can see nothing of you ! And is there any living with the reflections, that do what one will one must never expect to find again a child

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that was so dear to me ? I will soon convince you whether I wish it, by the way I shall go in search of her.

The Dauphin has been ill, but is now better : The court will be at Versailles till Monday. Madame de la Valiere is quite reinstated at Court. The king received her with tears of joy, and she has had several tender conversations with him. All this is a little incomprehensible, but we must be silent. The news of this year does not hold good from one post to another. I have an infinite number of compliments to you. I see your little one every day, I would fain have her strait. It would be droll enough that a child of yours and M. de Grignan should not be well made. I am pretty well skilled in these affairs, however I will not answer but that I am taking a needless precaution here.

LETTER XXII

TO THE SAME

Friday, 20 Feb. 1671.

I DECLARE to you I am infinitely desirous of hearing from you. Consider, my dear, I have not had a letter of yours since that from la Palice : I know nothing of the rest of your journey to Lyons, nor of your route to Provence. I am very certain that there are letters for me, but then I want them, and they don't come. I have nothing left to comfort and amuse me but in writing to you. You must know that Wednesday night last, after I came from

M. de Coulanges, where we had been making up our packets for post-day, I began to think of going to bed : that is nothing very extraordinary you 'll say, but what follows is more so ; about three o'clock in the morning I was wakened with a cry of thieves ! fire ! and it seemed so near, and grew so loud, that I had not the least doubt of its being in the house ; I even fancied I heard them talking about my little grand-daughter. I imagined she was burned, and in that apprehension got up without any light, and trembling in such a manner that I could scarce stand. I ran directly to her room, which is the same that was yours, and found every thing very quiet ; but I presently saw Guitaut's house all in flames, the fire had caught Madame de Vauvineux's. The flames cast a light all over our court-yard and Guitaut's, that made them look quite shocking : all was out-cry, hurry, and confusion, and the beams and joists falling down, made a dreadful noise. I immediately ordered our doors to be opened, and sent my people to give their assistance. Monsieur de Guitaut sent me a casket with what he had most valuable, which I secured in my cabinet, and then went into the street to gape like the rest. There I found Monsieur and Madame Guitaut in a manner naked ; Madame de Vauvineux, the Venetian ambassador, and all his people ; with little Vauvineux,¹ that they were carrying fast asleep to the ambassador's house, with a great quantity of rich moveables and plate. Madame de Vauvineux had removed all her goods ; as for our house, I knew

¹ Charlotta-Elizabeth de Cocheilet, married in 1679 to Charles de Rohan, Prince de Guemene, Duke de Montbason.

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it was as safe as if it had been in an island, but I was greatly concerned for my poor neighbours. Madame Gueton and her brother gave some excellent directions, but we were all in great consternation ; the fire was so fierce that there was no approaching it, and no one dreamed of its ceasing till it had burned poor Guitaut's house entirely down : He was really a melancholy object, he was for going to save his mother ; who was in the midst of the flames in the upper part of the house ; his wife clung about him, and held him as close as she could. He was in the greatest distress between the grief of not being able to save his mother, and the fear of hurting his wife, who was near five months gone with child. At last he begged me to lay hold of her, which I did, and he went in search of his mother, whom he found quite safe, after having run thro' the midst of the flames. He then endeavoured to save some papers, but found it impossible to get near the place where they were. At length he came back to us ; I had got his wife to sit down in the street ; some charitable Capuchins worked so well, and so skilfully, that they cut off the communication of the fire. Water was thrown upon the rest that was burning, and at last the battle ceased for want of combatants ; that is to say, after several of the best apartments were entirely consumed. It was looked upon as a piece of good fortune that any part of the house was saved, tho' as it is poor Guitaut will lose at least ten thousand crowns ; for they propose to rebuild the room that was gilt and painted. There were several fine pictures of M. Le Blanc's lost, whose house it was,

besides tables, looking-glasses, tapestry, and other valuable pieces of furniture. They are greatly concerned about some letters which I take to be those of the Prince. Well, by this it was near five o'clock in the morning, and time to think of getting Madame de Guitaut to rest ; I offered her my bed ; but Madame Gueton put her into hers, for she had several apartments in her house ready furnished. We had her bled, and sent for *Boucher*, who is apprehensive of a miscarriage from the violence of the fright. She is still at Madame Gueton's, where every body goes to see her. You will ask me, perhaps, how the fire happened, but that no body can tell. There was not a spark in the room where it first broke out ; but surely, could any one have thought of being merry at such a melancholy time, what pictures might not have been drawn of us in the situation we were then in ? Guitaut was all naked to his shirt and a pair of drawers ; his wife was bare-legged, and had lost one of her slippers ; Madame de Vauvineux was in a short under-petticoat, without any night-gown on ; all the footmen and the neighbours of the place were in their night-caps. The Ambassador in his night-gown and long peruke, perfectly well maintained the importance of a *Serenissimo*, but his secretary was a most admirable figure. You talk of Hercules's breast ; this was clear another thing, we had a full view of it, it was white, fat, plump, and quite bare, for the string that should have tied his shirt had been lost in the engagement : So much for the melancholy news of our quarter. Let me beg of Deville¹ that

¹ Maitre d'Hotel, or house steward, to Monsieur de Grignan.

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he would take his rounds every night, after the family is in bed, to see that the fire is out every where, for one cannot be too careful to prevent accidents of this kind. I hope the water was favourable to you in your passage ; in a word, I wish you every happiness, and implore the great God to preserve you from every evil.

Monsieur de Ventadour was to have been married on Thursday, that is yesterday, but is ill of a fever. The Marshal de la Motte has lost as good as five hundred crowns worth of fish. The other day while we were at table at M. du Man's, Courcelles told us he had got two such great bumps upon his forehead, that he could not get his wig on : This stupid speech of his made us all rise from table before we had well done with the fruit, for fear of laughing out in his face. Presently after in came d'Olonne, upon which M. de la R. F. whispers me, Madame these two can never stay in a room together, and as he said, so it was, for in a little time Courcelles retired.

Here are a number of trifles for you, my dear child, but to be continually telling you that I love you, that I think of nothing but you, that I employ myself about nothing but what concerns you, that you are the delight of my life, and that no one was ever so tenderly beloved by another ; must certainly be a tiresome repetition.

LETTER XXIII

TO THE SAME

Wednesday, 25 Feb. 1671.

I HAVE not yet received a Letter, which I am sure you wrote me from Lyons before you left that place, for I cannot easily suppose that, being able to write, and having actually wrote to M. de Coulanges, you could have forgot me : I make a great stir to find what has become of the packet. I received the first Letter you wrote me the day after you arrived there. I am not yet quite proof against what you write me. I was ready to faint with the thoughts of seeing you pass that Mountain ¹ by night, which no one ever attempts but between sun and sun, and then in a litter. I don't wonder if your brains were turned up-side-down. It seems that Monsieur de Coulanges had wrote to M. du Gue's ² secretary to send a Letter to Rouane ; if you had mentioned the day you thought to have got there you would certainly have found one ready for you. Sure never any person like yourself behaved as you have done, and, on the other hand, was ever poor woman suffered to starve in such a manner ? The forecast of the ant might teach us, that it was necessary to lay up provisions where

¹ The mountain of Tarare, which is in the high road between Rouane and Lyons ; and was formerly very difficult to pass, but of late years, by the great works that have been made there, passengers may pass with much more safety.

² Monsieur du Gue-Bagnols, Intendant of Lyons, father-in-law to M. de Coulanges.

they are to be had, against one wants them where they are not to be had. My dear child ! how you have been used ! had I been with you, things would have been ordered in a very different manner, and I should not have taken your resolution and courage for strength, as they have done. The adventure of Madame de Robinet¹ would have learned me not to consult you in what relates to your own person. In short, you have undergone great fatigues, thank God they are over now, but what affects you is not very easily nor speedily erased from my mind. I wrote to the Coadjutor upon his good head-piece ; let him shew you my Letter : I have sent you one from Guitaut, that will give you pleasure. I have made your compliments to Mesdames de Villars and Saint Geran ; the first has a very great affection for you, and intends writing to you. Take notice in your Letters, of my aunt, of la Troche, Vauvinette, and d'Escars, for they do nothing but talk of you. Madame du Gue has wrote to M. de Coulanges, that you are as handsome as an angel, and is quite charmed with your person and politeness : She says, she put you into your boat in delightful weather, and a calm water ; all which gives me hopes ; but I shall not be thoroughly easy till you are got to Arles. I hope Ripert made you get out when you came to any dangerous place. As for Seigneur Corbeau² I shall trust to him no more. I cannot accuse myself with giving way to any diversion, or suffering my thoughts to be taken off from you, during your whole journey : I have

¹ See Letter of the 19th of November 1670.

² The Coadjutor of Arles.

followed you step by step ; and when you was ill I had no rest : I am as faithful to you on the water as I was by land. We have reckoned every day's passage among us. We imagine that you got to Arles last Sunday. Monsieur de la R. F. says, that I perfectly well answer the notions he has of friendship, with all its circumstances and dependencies. He has had some farther conversations with *Melusina*, which are incomparable in their kind ; there is no writing them, so I shall only tell you in general, that they were just such as you would have wished them to be. Your little girl improves every day, she laughs, and begins to know every thing : I take a great deal of care of her. *Picquet* comes very frequently to see the nurse : I am not so ignorant in that as you take me to be. I follow your example, and do wonders when I trust to no-body but myself. Your brother returned hither the day before yesterday. I have scarcely seen him, he is at St. Germain, his eyes are quite well ; we were under some apprehensions about his health ; for he began to grow very dull at Nanci, after the departure of Madame *Madruche*.

At last I have received yours of Wednesday, which you wrote somewhat in haste, but still it gives me pleasure : It costs certain renewals of fondness, which are very agreeable. I can't think what kind of people those must be who are desirous to avoid them. You are going to embark, my dearest child ; you will let me have a Letter from every place where you can possibly write, I know you will. My God ! how great is my desire of hearing about you, and how dear are you to me !

LETTERS OF THE

The Count de St. Paul is now Monsieur de Longueville : Last Monday night his brother made over all his estate to him, which amounts to near three hundred thousand livres a year, together with all his rich furniture and jewels, and the Hotel de Longueville, so that he is now one of the best matches in France. It will be a good thing for Madame de Marans, if she can get him. I sincerely love M. de Grignan, but shall not answer his last Letter. Can he want any thing, having you with him ? M. Vallot¹ died this morning.

LETTER XXIV

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday 27 Feb. 1671.

THERE is nothing certain this year, not so much as the death of M. Vallot, which I now contradict. He is quite well, and instead of dying, they tell me he took a pill which set him upon his legs again. He has told the King, that he looked upon M. Chenai du Mans as the most skilful man of his profession. Madame de Mazarin set out for Rome two days ago. Monsieur de Nevers and his lady are not to go there till the summer. Monsieur de Mazarin complained bitterly to the King, of his wife's being sent to Rome without his consent ; he said it was an unheard-of thing, to take a woman from under the authority of her husband, and assign her a pension of eighty thousand livres a

¹ First physician to the King.

year, with a present of twelve thousand more, to enable her to take a journey that was contrary both to his approbation and honour. His Majesty gave him the hearing, but as the journey had been resolved upon before-hand, and every thing settled, nothing farther came of it. As for Madame de Mazarin, whenever any thing was said to her about making matters up with her husband, she used to put it off with a laugh, and answer as they did in the time of the civil war, *No Mazarin ! no Mazarin !*

With regard to Madame de la Valiere, we are very sorry we can't oblige you in sending her back to Chaillot ; but she is as well or better than ever at court ; and so you must resolve to let her stay there. The Duke de Longueville is now called the Abbe d'Orleans, and the Count de St. Paul takes the title of Duke de Longueville. Monsieur de Duras has the same command during the expedition to Flanders this year, as M. de Lauzun had the last, and it is so much the better to him, as the number of troops is nearly double. The King has made Mademoiselle de la Motte one of the Queen's maids of honour, a present of two hundred thousand franks, which will presently get her a husband. Monsieur de Lauzun has refused the baton of Marshal of France, which the King was pleased to offer him : He said he had not merited it, that had he served for it he should esteem it as the greatest honour, but that he was resolved not to accept of it but in the common way. D'Hacqueville has by his interest procured six thousand livres a year for Cardinal de Retz ; it is from the same fund as that which was given to the Cardinal de Bouillon, only he is not obliged to the clergy for it.

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LETTER XXV

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday Night 27 Feb. 1671.

THAT same Rhone, my dear child, hangs strangely about my heart : I believe you are got safe over it, but still I should be better pleased to hear it from yourself, and wait for it with an impatience of a piece with all the rest. We think you got to Arles last Saturday. We think that Monsieur de Grignan came as far as Saint Esprit to meet you : we think he was overjoyed to see you, and have you with him again : we think you made your entry into Aix on Wednesday ; and then we think you was very much tired. Rest yourself in the name of God, keep in bed, and recover yourself, and let me know exactly how you are. Do you know that your remembrance makes the fortune of those whom you favour with it : All the rest languish for it. Your line to my aunt cannot be returned as yet, but however we are very far from forgetting you. I have been told a thousand horrible stories about that villainous mountain Tarare : Oh, I hate it. They say there is another certain road where the way is all in the air, and the coach is carried along by its top. I can't bear that thought ! but, however, it is all at an end now.

Answer to the Letter from Vienne

I have that dear Letter at last ! Do you not see how I receive it ? with what emotion I read it ? I fancy you will hardly expect me to be

indifferent on the occasion. It is certain that the high rank you hold in point of beauty subjects you to many little fatigues. If you was not so handsome you might take your rest. You must determine : Your indifference gives me uneasiness. There is nothing so amiable as beauty : It is a present from the Deity, which we ought to preserve with the utmost care. You know what pleasure I take in your beauty ; I interest myself in it from a principle of self-love, and earnestly recommend it to your care for my sake ; for I figure to myself, that the people of Provence will look upon me as a very clever person to have produced that fine face, with all its sweetness and regularity. You seem to be displeased that your nose was not set across your face ; but for my part, who am in my senses, I am extremely glad it is not. I can't think what my party-coloured eyebrows must make of me. But, after all, don't you think M. de Coulanges and I must be conjurers to guess so pat every thing that you do ? You don't seem at all surprised at the banks of the Rhone, you think them beautiful, and that that river is only mere water, as well as the others : For my part, I assure you, I have very extraordinary notions of it ; and am ready to cry out with the poet,

“ Mille sources de sang forment cette riviere,
Qui trainant des corps morts, & de vieux ossemens,
Au lieu de murmurer, fait des gémissemens.” ¹

I shall make your compliments to Madame de Villars ; she has begged to be named in my Letters.

¹ Lines of the Abbe de Cerisi, in his Temple of Death.

LETTERS OF THE

I thank you for mentioning Brancas. You doubtless saw your aunt¹ at St. Esprit, and was received like a Queen : I beg, my dear, you will let me know all about it, and tell me something of Monsieur de Grignan and Monsieur d'Arles.² You know that we have laid it down as a maxim, that tho' trifling details are disagreeable from those that are indifferent to us, yet they are pleasing from those we love. I leave you to guess in which of these lights you stand with me. Bourdaloue gives me every now and then a pleasure and satisfaction, that ought at least to contribute to make me better ; whenever I hear any thing fine, I wish for you : you share in all my thoughts, and I admire in myself the effects of a sincere friendship. I embrace you most affectionately ; do the same to me on your part. A small remembrance to my Coadjutor : as for M. de Grignan, he I suppose is so proud of having you with him, that he no longer minds any one.

LETTER XXVI

TO THE SAME

Paris, Tuesday 3 March, 1671.

WAS you here, my dear child, you would certainly laugh at me. I am sate down to write beforehand ; but from a very different reason to

¹ Anna d'Ornano, wife to Francis de Lorraine, Count d'Harcourt, and sister to Margaret d'Ornano, mother to Monsieur de Grignan.

² Francis Adhemar de Monteil, Archbishop of Arles, Commander of the King's Orders, uncle to M. de Grignan.

that which I once gave you for writing to a person two days before the post was set out there ; it was a matter of indifference to me, when I wrote, as I knew I should have no more to say to him at the two days end, than I had just then : But here the case is far otherwise. I do it now from the regard I have for you, and to satisfy the pleasure I take in writing to you every moment, as the sole comfort that I have now left. This day I am shut up by myself in my room, through excess of ill humour. I am weary of every thing. I took a pleasure in dining here, and still a greater one in letting you know what I am about : But alas ! I am afraid you have none of these leisure moments ! I write this quite at my ease, but can hardly think you will be able to read it in the same manner. I don't see how it is possible for you to be a minute by yourself. On one side I behold a husband who adores you, who never is tired of being with you, and who scarcely knows the end of his happiness : On the other side, harangues, crouds of compliments, visits, continual honours paid you ; all this must be answered. Indeed, you have enough upon your hands ; I could not bear it myself in my little circle. But what becomes of your favourite Indolence amidst all this noise and hurry ? It suffers now ; it retires into the corner of some little closet, just dead with apprehension of losing its place in your heart for ever ; it seeks for some vacant moment to put you in remembrance, and just drop a word to you by the bye. Alas ! it says, And have you then forgot me ? Remember I am the oldest acquaintance you have ; the friend that has never abandoned

you ; the faithful companion of your happy hours, who made you amends for the want of every pleasure, and for whose sake you have sometimes hated them. 'Twas I that prevented your dying with vapours, while you was in Brittany, and during your pregnancy ; sometimes, indeed, your mother would break in upon our joys, but then I knew where to meet with you again ; but now I know not what will become of me. These shews, and all this pageantry will be my death, unless you take some care of me. Methinks, I hear you say a kind word to it, as you go by ; you give it some hopes of possessing you, when at Grignan ; but you are presently gone, and cannot find time to say any more. Duty and reason guard your steps, and allow you not a moment for repose : I who have always so highly honoured them, am now quite out with them, and they with me. How then will they permit you to waste your time in reading such impertinencies as these ? I assure you, my dear child, I am continually thinking of you ; and I experience every day the truth of what you once told me, that there are certain thoughts which are not to be dwelt upon, but passed over as lightly as possible, unless one would be for ever in tears : that is my case ; for there is not a single place in the house which does not give a stab to my heart when I see it : but your room especially deals a deadly blow from every part of it. I have caused a partition to be put up in the middle, that I may at least take something from the prospect. As for that window from whence I saw you get into d'Hacqueville's coach, and called you back again, I shudder every time I think how near

I was throwing myself out of it after you. I was likely enough to have done it ; for I am mad at times. The closet where I held you last in my arms, without knowing what I did ; the capuchins, where I used to go to mass ; the tears that fell so fast from my eyes, that they wetted the ground as if so much water had been thrown on it ; Saint Mary's, Madame de la Fayette, my return to the house, your room, that night, the next morning, your first letter, and every one since, and still every day, and each conversation of those who feel with me, are so many cutting remembrancers to me of my loss. Poor d'Hacqueville holds the first rank : I shall never forget the compassion he shewed for me. These are the thoughts incessantly uppermost ; yet these are to be passed over it seems ; we are not to abandon one's self to one's thoughts, and the emotions of one's heart. Well ! I had rather continue the kind of life I now lead on your account. It occasions a sort of digression, without taking me off from the subject, or making me abandon my principal object ; or, in poetical terms, the beloved object. I am impatient to hear from you, my dear, and shall go on with my letter, when I have received one from you. My dearest child, I really abuse your patience, but I was willing to indulge myself with this beforehand : my heart stood in need of it ; but I will not make a practice of this.

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LETTER XXVII

TO THE SAME

Paris, Wednesday 4 March, 1671.

AH ! my dear child, what a Letter ! What a description of the condition you have been in ! how badly should I have kept my word with you, had I made you a promise of not being terrified at so much danger ! I know very well it is over now ; but it is impossible to think of your life having been so near to its end, and not shudder with horror : and Monsieur de Grignan to let you steer the boat ; and when you are rash and vent'rous, he thinks it mighty pretty to be still more so himself, instead of staying till the storm was over : he must needs expose you : Oh Lord ! how much better would it have been to have had a little less courage, and to have told you plainly, that if you was not afraid, he was ; and not have suffered you to have passed the Rhone in such weather ! I can't think what became of all his tenderness for you at that time. The Rhone ! a river that strikes every one with fear and dread ; the bridge of Avignon, which one would not choose to pass, even with the greatest precaution ! and here comes a violent squall of wind, and throws you on a sudden under one of the arches. What a miracle that you had not been beat all to pieces, and every creature drowned in an instant ! I tremble whenever I think of it ; and I have awaked in such frights and distress, that I have been scarce mistress of myself. Do you still

look upon the Rhone as no more than a common river ? Was you not, tell me truly, greatly terrified at the near prospect of inevitable death ? Tell me what of it remains with you. I hope, at least, that you returned thanks to heaven for your deliverance. I shall come upon M. de Grignan for this. As for the Coadjutor, he has had a pretty good time of it : he was only scolded about the mountain of Tarare : but that appears like the plains of Nemours to me now. Monsieur Busche has been to see me ; I thought I should have thrown my arms round the man's neck, when I considered how safely he had carried you : I held him a long while in discourse about how you looked, and how you did, and then dismissed him with something to drink my health. This letter will appear very silly to you ; for you will receive it at a time, when the bridge of Avignon will be quite out of your head ; and must I still think of it ? This is one of the misfortunes that attend a distant correspondence : but one must reconcile one's self to it ; there is no resisting this inconvenience ; it is natural, and it would be too great a constraint to endeavour to stifle all one's thoughts. One should always enter into the state of mind a person is supposed to be in, at the time they answer a thing that nearly concerns them : if so, you must make frequent excuses for me. I wait for your account of what passed during your stay at Arles. I know you must have seen a great many people there. Do you not love me now, for making you learn Italian ? What service it was of to you with the Vice Legate ! Your description of that scene is excellent. But how little was I pleased

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with the rest of your letter ! However, I 'll spare you the renewal of that eternal theme of mine, the bridge of Avignon. But I shall never forget it while I live.

LETTER XXVIII

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday 6 March, 1671.

IT is now the 6th of March, I entreat you to let me know how you are. If you are well, you are ill ; if you are ill, you are well. Indeed, my dear child, I wish you was ill, that you might be well at least for some time. Here is a riddle now, very difficult to be solved ; I expect that you will explain it to me. You have given me a most delightful relation of your entry into Arles ; but methinks you must stand greatly in need of rest : you have the fatigues of the whole journey to get over yet ; and how will you find time to do it ? You are there like the Queen, and she never takes any rest, but is always in the same condition that you have been in lately : you must endeavour then to have her spirit, and bear with patience the load of ceremonies you are to undergo. I am persuaded that M. de Grignan is delighted with the reception you met with. You never say any thing about him now, and yet it is a circumstance I am a little curious about. As for the Coadjutor, I fancy he was drowned under the bridge of Avignon. Lord ! how that hideous place still runs in my head ! Tell me, will not this make you a little less ven-

MARCHIONESS DE SEVIGNE

turous? You have always suffered by it, witness your first pregnancy. I am sure it has cost me very dear at times, as well as you. The Rhone is passed, that's certain; but I am in continual apprehension lest you should be for climbing some precipice, and no body to hinder you from doing it. My dear child, have some compassion on me, if you have none on yourself. Madame de Caderousse's coachman puts me often in mind of the Cardinal de Retz's. Ah! M. Busche, what a charming man are you! I told you how well I received him. I am persuaded poor Caderousse will die soon: it is hardly known here whether she is living or dead. I could tell something about her, if I could be heard. Corbinelli writes me wonders about you: but what gives him the greatest pleasure is, that he thinks he can perceive that you love me; and he has such a regard for me, that he is charmed to find others of the same way of thinking with himself. But how happy does he appear to me, to have seen you, touched you, to have sat and wrote by you! and I fancy it was some satisfaction to you likewise to see a person, who is so much my friend, and I assure you no less yours.

MONSIEUR DE SEVIGNE

I take the opportunity of slipping out between the two acts, to let you know that I am just come from a most delightful concert, composed of the two Camus' and Ytier. You are sensible that the usual effect of musick is that of waking the tender sensations; though I have no occasion for that

LETTERS OF THE

with respect to you, yet it has renewed a thousand little circumstances of tenderness, that one would have thought extinguished by so long a separation as ours has been. But do you know what company I have been in? There was Mademoiselle de l'Enclos, Madame de la Sabliere, Mademoiselle de Fiennes, Madame de Montsorau, all together at Mademoiselle de Remond's. After this, if you don't think me a clever fellow, you are to blame ; for you have not the same reason on your side as they have, since you cannot see my black wig where you are, which indeed makes me look frightful, but I shall have another on to-morrow, which will make all up, and set me off like a *Cavaliero Garbato*. Adieu. I give you joy of your escape from the Rhone affair, and of your reception in your kingdom of Arles. *A propos*, I made Monsieur de Condom¹ shudder with telling him your adventure ; he has a sincere love for you.

MADAME DE SEVIGNE

We are in pain here to know if you can keep from laughing when you are harangued. You must know I am under some apprehensions upon that score. If your actions are of a piece with your words, they do well to worship you. The number of those who compliment you by me, and desire me to let you know it, and beg to hear from you, is infinite : I should have my face as much ruffled as yours, was I to embrace them all. I shall communicate your accounts to Brancas. Father Bour-

¹ Monsieur Bossuet, afterwards Bishop of Meaux.

MARCHIONESS DE SEVIGNE

daloue's sermon this morning was beyond any he ever yet preached. The court continues going and coming to and from Versailles : The Dauphin and M. de Anjou are better. There's fine news for you ! Mad. de la Fayette, and the company that are generally at her house, beg to have their friendship for you remembered, and desire that you will have a little for them. Mad. de la Fayette says, she should be vastly pleased to act the part you do for a while, if for the sake of change only ; you know she is apt to be weary of the same thing sometimes. M. d'Usez¹ is quite charmed with the honours that are paid you ; and is sure, he says, that since the days of Saint Trophimus² there was never such a niece as you. Madame de Tourville is dead ; La Gourville weeps well. The Princess³ is at Chateauroux *ad multos annos*. Your daughter is very pretty. I love her, and take a great deal of care of her.

LETTER XXIX

TO THE SAME

Paris, Wednesday 11 March, 1671.

I HAVE received no letter from you as yet ; I may, perhaps, before I seal this : think, my dear child, that it is upwards of a week since I have heard the least thing from you, and that is an age

¹ James Adhemar de Monteil, Bishop of Usez, Uncle to M. de Grignan.

² The first Bishop of Arles.

³ Clara Clementina de Maille-Breze, wife to Louis of Bourbon, Prince of Conde.

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to me. You have been at Arles, but I have not heard of your arrival there from yourself. Yesterday there was a gentleman¹ of that country came to wait on me, who was present when you arrived there, and saw you playing at Primero, with Vardes, Bandol, and another person. I wish I was able to tell you in what manner I received him, and how he appeared to me, after having seen you no longer ago than last Thursday. You was so much surprised at the Abbe de Vins's being able to leave M. de Grignan, I am much more so at this man's being able to leave you : he found me with Father Mascaron, to whom I had given a very handsome dinner ; as he preaches in my parish, and came to see me the other day, I thought it would be no more than right to act the little devotee, and give him a small regale. He comes from Marseilles, and was quite pleased to hear talk of Provence. I have learned too, by other hands, that you have had two or three little disputes since you have been there ; my dear child, there is no such thing as being in Provence without meeting some unlucky accident. But perhaps there may be nothing in what has been told me, so I 'll wait to have it confirmed by yourself, before I give you my advice on the subject. I asked this gentleman if you was not greatly fatigued ? he made answer, that you looked extremely handsome ; but you know I am more clear-sighted than others, with respect to you, and could, through all those praises, very plainly perceive you pulled down with your fatigue. I have had a cold for some days past, for which I have kept my room : almost all your

¹ Monsieur de Julianis.

friends took that opportunity of coming to see me : the Abbe Tetu¹ desired me to make particular mention of him when I wrote to you ; I never saw any one live so much in the hearts of others during their absence ; it is a miracle reserved for yourself : you know we used to find that we could do very well without people when they were gone ; but there is no doing without you : my whole life is employed in talking of you ; and I seek the company of those most who give the greatest attention to me ; but don't imagine that I make myself ridiculous by it ; for, in the first place, the subject is not so in itself ; and then I perfectly well know my time, place, and people, and what is proper to be said, and what not. You see I can speak pretty well of myself now and then : I beg pardon for it of Bourdaloue and Mascaron, for I go to hear one or the other every morning : and the tenth part of the glorious things they say, is more than sufficient to make one a Saint.

I have just received your letter, my dearest child, and shall answer it with all imaginable haste, for it is very late ; here now is the good of writing beforehand. I plainly perceive that all was not true which was told me about the affair you had at your first arrival : these little kind of disputes in the towns of Provence, where the people are full of

¹ James Tetu, Abbe of Belval, author of a book entitled, Christian Stanzas on several passages of the Scriptures and holy Fathers. He belonged to the French Academy : we must not confound him with another Abbe Tetu, who was likewise of the same Academy, and of whom there is never the least mention made in any of Mad. de Sevigne's letters.

nothing else, must necessarily bring on a multitude of *ecclaircissements*, and nothing can be more tiresome. But stay, my Lady Countess, I think you are a very extraordinary person to shew my letters as you do ! where is your principle of secrecy for those you love ? Do you remember what trouble we used to have, only to get a sight of the date of one of M. de Grignan's to you ? You think to make all up by the praises you bestow upon me ; and at the same time you hand me about like the Holland Gazette ; but I'll be revenged ! You conceal all the kind things I write to you, you little rogue, but I shew those I receive from you, now and then, to particular friends : I don't intend that people shall think I am dying, and for ever in tears ; *for whom ? a base ingrate !* I would have it seen that you love me, and that if you have my whole heart, I have at least a place in yours. I shall deliver all your compliments ; every one asks me, am not I named ? I answer no ; but you will be. For example now, name me Monsieur d'Ormesson, and some others of the same stamp. There is great crowding to get a remembrance from you ; all those you send me are presently carried off ; and no wonder, my dear, for you are truly amiable ; there is no one like you. This however you may conceal, for surely since Niobe¹ never mother talked in the manner I do. As for M. de Grignan, he may assure himself, that if I should one day or another get hold of his wife, I shall not give him her back again : What ! not so much as thank me for such a present ! not to tell me that he is transported with

¹ See her story, in Ovid, *Metam.* B. 6.

it ! He writes to beg it of me ; and then, when I have granted it, never thanks me for it ! However, I can easily suppose him overwhelmed with business as well as you : my anger weighs but little with me, but my love for you both a great deal. All what you tell me is very diverting ; it is a pity you had not time to say more. Good God ! how I long for your letters ! it is now above half an hour since I received one. I have no news for you : the king is in good health ; he goes from Versailles to St. Germain's, and from St. Germain's to Versailles : every thing is as it was. The Queen performs her devotions very frequently, and goes to the elevation of the Host. Father Bourdaloue continues to preach ; there are no praises can come up to his merit. Our Abbe had a little dispute the other day, before sermon, with Monsieur de Noyon,¹ who gave him to understand, that he ought to give place to a person of the house of Clermont. We laughed very heartily to think of his grand title being made use of to take place of an Abbe at church. We reckoned how many Keys² had been in the house of Tonnerre, and canvassed the good Prelate's knowledge in point of *Peerage*. I dine every Friday at Le³ Mans, with M. de la R. F., Mad. de Brissac and Bonserade, who is the life of the whole company. If Provence loves me, I am its most

¹ Francis de Clermont-Tonnerre, Bp. and Count de Noyon, Peer of France, and Commander of the King's Orders.

² The Cross Keys are the proper ensigns of the Episcopal function, as well as the Crosier.

³ Philibert Emanuel de Beaumanoir, Bp. of Mans, Commander of the King's Orders.

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obedient humble servant ; pray continue me in its good graces. I shall send my compliments to it whenever you think proper. I say nothing to M. de Vardes, nor to my Friend Corbinelli, for I fancy they are returned to Languedoc. I love your daughter for your sake, for I do not yet find the bowels of *grandmotherly* affection yearn within me.

LETTER XXX

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday 13 March, 1671.

HERE am I, to the joy of my heart, all alone, in my own room, and writing quietly to you, which is a most agreeable situation to me. I dined to-day at Mad. de Lavardin's, after having been to Bourdaloue, where I saw the two *matrons* of the church, for so I call the Princesses of Conti and Longueville. All the world was at the sermon, and the sermon was deserving of all who heard it. I thought of you twenty times, and wished as often to have you there ; you would have been charmed to hear him, and I still more so to have seen you there to hear him. M. de la R. F. was at Mad. de Lavardin's, and received very drolly the compliment you sent him : we talked a great deal about you. Monsieur d'Ambres was there with his cousin de Brissac : he seemed greatly concerned for your supposed shipwreck, and we all took notice of your rashness. Monsieur de la R. F. would have it that you gave yourself airs of great courage, in hopes

that somebody would have hindered you from going ; but finding that not to be the case, you was certainly in the same situation with poor Scaramouch. We have been to the fair to see a horrible great woman : she is taller than Riberpre by a whole head : she was brought to bed the other day, and had two monstrous large children at a birth ; they came into the world a-breast, with their arms a-kimbo. Oh she is a violent big woman ! I have been to the Hotel de Rambouillet, to carry them your compliments ; they return theirs a thousand fold. I have also been at Madame du Pui du-Fou's, and Madame de Maillane's, for the third time : I often smile at myself to think what pleasure I take in doing all these little things. And now, if you should suppose that the Queen's maids are all run mad, you will not suppose amiss : for about a week since, Mesd. de Ludre, Coetlogon, and little Kuvroi, were bit by a dog belonging to Theobon, and the creature has since died mad ; so that de Ludre, Coetlogon, and Kuvroi are set out this morning for Dieppe, in order to be dipped three times in the salt water : it is a very melancholy journey for them ; Theobon would not go ; she had a small bite too ; but the Queen won't let her be in waiting till it is seen how all this turns out. Don't de Ludre appear to you like Andromeda ? As for me, I think I see her bound to a rock, and Treville on a flying horse, slaying the monster. *Ah ! Coot Cot Matame de Grignan, vat a ting it is to be trown naket into te sea !*¹

Here is a budget full of nonsense, but not one word yet from you : you may suppose that I can

¹ Mad. de Ludre's way of speaking.

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guess what you are doing ; but the state of your health and mind is too precious to me to be contented with bare imagination only. The least circumstances relating to those we love, are as dear, as they are trifling and indifferent from others. This I have said over and over, but it is no less true. La Vauvineux makes you a thousand compliments ; her daughter has been very ill, and so has Mad. d'Arpajon : take notice of all this in your next, and of Mad. de Verneuil likewise, when you have leisure. I send you a letter from M. Condom, which I received enclosed in a very pretty Billet. Your brother is engaged with Ninon¹ ; I wish it may be for his good ; there are some minds that do not profit much by such sort of engagements, she hurt your father : we must recommend him to God. Those who are Christians, or at least pretend to be so, cannot see such depravity without concern. Ah, Bourdaloue ! what divine truths did you tell us this day concerning death ! Mad. de la Fayette was there for the first time in her life : she was transported with admiration ; she is vastly pleased with your remembering her. I have made her a present of a fine copy of your picture ; it adorns her room, where you are never forgotten. If you are still in the same way of thinking you was in at Saint Mary's, and keep my letters by you, see if you have not mine of the 18th Feb.

A thing passed yesterday at MADEMOISELLE'S, which gave me pleasure to see. Who should come in but Madame de Gevres, in all her airs and charms. I fancy she expected I should have offered her my

¹ Mademoiselle de l'Enclos.

place ; but, by the bye, I owed her a little affront ever since the other day, and now I paid her home, for I did not budge. MADemoiselle was in bed, so Madame de Gevres was obliged to place herself at the lower end of the room, a provoking thing that. The Princess called for drink ; some body must present the napkin. I perceived Madame de Gevres pulling the glove off her withered hand, upon which I gave Madame d'Arpajon, who was above me, a push, which she understood ; and, pulling off her glove, with the best grace in the world, advances a step, gets before the Dutchess, takes the napkin, and presents it. The Dutchess was quite confounded ; for she had got to the upper end of the room, had pulled off her glove, and all to have the mortification of being a nearer witness of Mad. d'Arpajon's presenting the napkin before her. My dear child, I am very malicious ; this pleased me infinitely : it was excellently well hit off. Would one have thought of a person's running to deprive Madame d'Arpajon of a little piece of honour, which is naturally her due, as being one of the bed-chamber ? Madame de Puisieux was very merry about it. As for MADemoiselle, she did not dare look up, and my countenance was none of the most settled. After this was over, I had a thousand kind things said to me about you ; and MADemoiselle was pleased to order me to tell you, that she is very glad you escaped drowning, and are in good health.

I will give you up those two volumes of La Fontaine ; and, be as angry as you will, I insist upon it that they have their entertaining passages, as well

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as their heavy ones. It is a misfortune when one is not contented with having done well, but must endeavour to do better, and so make all worse.

LETTER XXXI

TO THE SAME

Paris, Sunday 15 March, 1671.

MONSIEUR de la Brosse insists upon my giving him a letter of introduction to you. What a joke is this? you know the esteem and friendship I have for him; you know likewise that his father is one of my oldest friends: you are not unacquainted with the merit of either the one or the other, and have all the esteem for them that I could wish you to have: what service then can my letter be of to him? it is to me indeed that it is of service, if to any one, for it furnishes me with an opportunity of writing to you, a thing I am so fond of. It is odd enough to observe what pleasure one takes in conversing with a person one loves, tho' at a distance; and how tiresome it is to be obliged to write to others. I think myself happy in having begun my day with you. Little *Pequet* has attended me for a horrible cold I have had, and which will be over by the time you receive this. We talked of you, and afterwards I set about writing to you. I do not know the meaning of the post's being so irregular, and that those people who are so very obliging to set out at midnight with my letters to you, should be so remiss in bringing back your

answers. The Abbe and I are continually talking about your affairs, but he gives you an account of all that passes, therefore I shall say nothing farther. Your health, your ease, your affairs, are the three principal subjects of my thoughts, from which I draw an inference which I leave you to reflect upon.

LETTER XXXII

TO THE SAME

Paris, Wednesday 18 March, 1671.

I HAVE received two packets together, which have been delayed for a considerable time. By these I am at length informed from yourself, of your entry into Aix, but you do not mention whether your husband was with you, or in what manner Vardes honoured your triumph : otherwise you describe the triumph itself very merrily, as well as the embarrassment you was under, and your many misplaced civilities. Good God, that I had been with you ! not that I should have done better than yourself ; for I have not so good a gift of fixing names upon faces ; on the contrary, I am every day committing a thousand mistakes that way ; but I think I could have been of some assistance to you, at least I should have made curt'sies enough : tho' it is certain that such an abundance of ceremony is very tiresome. You should, nevertheless, endeavour not to be deficient in any of these points, but to accommodate yourself, as much as possible, to the

customs and manners of those amongst whom you are to live.

There has happened an affair, which at present engrosses the whole talk of Paris. The King has ordered Monsieur de S. . . . to resign his post, and to quit Paris immediately : And do you know for what ? for having cheated at play, and won upwards of five hundred thousand crowns with false cards. The man who made these cards has been examined by the King himself : he denied the fact at first ; but, upon his Majesty's promising him his pardon, he confessed that he had followed that trade for a long time : it is said that this affair will not stop here, for that there are several houses which he used to furnish with false cards. The King was some time before he could prevail upon himself to disgrace a man of Monsieur de S. . . .'s quality ; but, as for these several months past every body that had play'd with him had been in a manner ruined, he thought he could in conscience do no less than bring such a scene of villainy to light. S. . . . was perfectly master of the game of those he played with, that he always made *Sept & le va* upon the Queen of Spades, because he knew the Spades lay all in the other packs. The King as constantly lost one and thirty upon Clubs, and used to say Clubs never win against Spades in this country. This man had given thirty pistoles to Mad. de la Valere's valets de chambre to throw all the cards they had in the house into the river, under pretence that they were not good, and had introduced his own card-maker. He was first brought into this fine way of life by one *Pradier*, who has since

disappeared. Had S. . . . known himself innocent, he should immediately have delivered himself up, and insisted upon taking his trial ; but instead of this, he took the road to Languedoc, as the surest way of the two : however, a journey to La Trape¹ was thought the fittest for him, after such an affair.

Madame d'Humieres has charged me with a thousand good wishes for you : she is going to Lisle, where she will meet with as many honours as you did at Aix. Marshal Bellefond, through a pure motive of piety, has settled matters with his creditors : he has given up to them the chief of what he is worth, over and above the better half of the profits of his post,² to compleat the payment of the whole. This is a noble action, and shews that his visits to La Trape have not been without effect. I went the other day to see the Dutchess of *Ventadour*, she was as handsome as an angel.

Your brother is at St. Germain, where he spends his time between Ninon and a young actress,³ and Despreaux to crown the whole. We lead him a horrid life about it.

¹ La Trape, is a society of religious Monks, remarkable for the great austerity of their lives, and the severe discipline practised amongst them.

² That of Chief Maitre d'Hotel, or Master of the Household to the King.

³ Called la Champmelee.

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LETTER XXXIII

TO THE SAME

The same Day as the preceding one.

I HAVE just received yours of the 11th, which I sit down to answer before I send away my packet. I am as much or more enraged than you are at the delays of the post.

MONSIEUR DE BARILLON¹

I interrupt the most amiable of mothers to write you two or three words, which, if not very elegant, will at least be very true. Know then, Madam, that I have always loved you beyond what I ever ventured to declare to you, and that if ever I come to govern, Provence shall have no more Governantes: Till that happens, govern well, and reign with mildness over the people whom heaven has subjected to your law. Adieu, Madam, I quit Paris without regret.

MADAME DE SEVIGNE

'Twas poor Barillon, as you see, that interrupted me : he finds me not a whit further advanced, as to receiving your letters, without weeping. I cannot do it, my dear child, and do not wish me to be able to do it. Love me for my affection, love me for my weakness, I am perfectly well reconciled

¹ Counsellor of state, and Ambassador to the court of England.

to it myself. I prefer my present sentiments far before those of Epictetus or Seneca. I am soft and tender even to a degree of folly, you are every thing to me, my dear child, I know nothing but you. Alas ! I am exactly in the condition you suppose ; fond of those who love and have you in remembrance. I am every day more and more sensible of this. When I met *Mellusina*, my heart was all in a flutter with anger and surprise ; she came up to me in her way : Well, Madam, says she, are you very angry ? Yes, Madam, I replied, as much so as it is possible to be ! Oh, I believe it, upon my word ; well then I must come and comfort you. You may spare yourself the trouble, Madam, for it will be to no purpose : Why, are you not at home, then, Madam ? No, Madam, I am never to be met with. There 's our dialogue word for word. I assure you she is quite *debellated*, as M. de Coulanges terms it ; she seems now to have scarce any tongue left. But to return to my letters, which they will not send you ; I am vexed to death about it. Do you think they open them ? They would not keep them surely ? Ah, let me conjure those who give themselves all this trouble, to consider what small satisfaction they will have in reading them, and how great a vexation they give us both. Be careful at least, dear gentlemen, to seal them safely up again, that they may come to hand one time or another. You talk of painting in description ; that which you give of the dress of the ladies of your province, is certainly as excellent as it is possible for description to be. You say you wish you could see me enter your room, and hear me

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talk. Alas ! it is my greatest delight to see you, to talk to you, to hear you speak ; I consume in longings for it, and with vexation for not having seen and heard you sufficiently, tho' methinks I lost but few of those precious moments, and yet I am not contented even with that reflection : I am foolish, that is beyond all dispute. However, it is a folly you are bound to love. I cannot conceive how one can be always thinking of one person. Shall I never have done thinking of you ? No ! not till thought itself is no more.

LETTER XXXIV

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday 20 March, 1671.

THE Coadjutor of Rheims was with us the other day at Madame de Coulanges'. I was complaining to him of the irregularity of the post ; and he told me they had played him tricks, as well as me, for that he had wrote twice to you, and had not as yet had any answer. He is going to Rheims. Lord ! says Madame de Coulanges to him, what a folly to think of going to Rheims ! what are you going to do there ? you will be as weary of it as a dog. Pr'ythee stay here, and we will take a jaunt now and then together. We could not help smiling at such a speech to an Archbishop,¹ nor could she herself ; but tho' we did not think it very canonical, yet we were persuaded that were the ladies to

¹ Charles-Maurice le Tellier.

address many of our reverend prelates in this manner, they might not altogether lose their labour. Monsieur de la R. F. has asked me upwards of twenty times, whether you had received your comfits as yet, and I told him all the sweet things you said upon the occasion. Here is a story which he sends you this time in the room of comfits. He was told by the Count d'Estrees, that in his voyage to Guinea he happened to fall in with some of the inhabitants who had been made Christians ; and that going one day into one of their churches, he saw twenty negro canons, quite naked, with square caps upon their heads, and the *Aummusse*¹ upon their left arm, chaunting the service. He begs you will make some reflections upon this odd rencounter ; and would not have you fancy that they had any thing like a surplice on them, but were just as naked as ever they came out of their mother's womb, and as black as so many devils. There's my commission executed.

Madame de Guise has made a *faux pas* at Versailles, which she endeavoured to conceal : She was brought to bed at the four months' end of a poor infant, who was not baptized : Here is a warning for you to take care of yourself, and not hide your faults when you have committed them. D'Hacqueville has sent you a very merry song, that has been made on Monsieur de Longueville ; it is in imitation of a recitative in an entertainment, that you do not know, but that you have heard me say was very pretty. I know it very well, and can sing it.

¹ An ornament which Canons wear on their left arm when they go to their office.

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Your letter to Guitaut is very pretty : I am passionately fond of your letters. If I have the art of painting in words, and that you think you see what I tell you, you will not certainly forget the Canons of Guinea. The other day, as Father Desmares¹ was going into the pulpit, he had a billet slipt into his hand ; and putting on his spectacles, began to read it aloud ; it was as follows :

*De par Monseigneur de Paris
On declare a tous Maris
Que leurs femmes on baisera. Alleluja.*²

He read above half of it before he discovered his mistake, every one was ready to die with laughter. You see we have our wits among us. I suppose you know that MADEMOISELLE has turned off Guilloire ; and poor Segrais does not stand very well with her ; it seems they had both expressed their sentiments a little too freely on Monsieur de Lauzun's affair. Mention a word or two of Madame de Lavardin in one of yours ; she is perfectly enraptured with your merit, and I with the fondness I have for you ; if I do not tell it you as often as I would, it is thro' discretion ; but in a word, you possess me wholly ; and without establishing a rendezvous for the mind, like Mademoiselle de Scudery, you may be assured that you can at no time think of me that I am not doing

¹ Priest of the Oratory.

² Thus Englished :

His grace of Paris gives to know
To every husband high and low,
That we their wives will kiss. Alleluja.

the same by you. Look now and then at this charming moon, which I look at too, and we shall both see the same thing, tho' at two hundred leagues distance from each other.

LETTER XXXV

TO THE SAME

Paris, Monday 23 March, 1671.

IS it not very cruel to have received none of your letters yet? Monsieur de Coulanges has received his and has been here to insult me with them: He has shewn me your answer to the *extempore*, which I thought so pretty that I read it twice over, with the greatest pleasure. How exactly you express my notion. This *extempore* was made at one end of the table on which I was writing to you, it pleased me greatly, and put me in mind of that I was so wretchedly out in one day; do you remember how cruel you was to me that day? You condemned me without any mercy, and not all the entreaties of d'Hacqueville could prevail on you to grant me a second hearing. I had committed a great fault to be sure, but to be tucked up as I was, without having any time allowed me, was really very hard. Monsieur de Coulanges' song was very pretty: There is a pleasure in sending you these kind of trifles, you answer them so charmingly. You know nothing is so vexatious, as after having wrote something that we imagine will please and divert, to have it passed by un-

noticed, or at most received with a cold indifference. You are not so cruel, you are amiable in all and for all ! And how much too are you beloved, in how many hearts do you hold the first place ! and how few can say this besides yourself ! Monsieur de Coulanges is writing you the maddest letter that can be, but quite in the natural ; it has diverted me extremely. I was yesterday with Monsieur de la R. F. I found him roaring out violently ; his pains were so sharp that they quite got the better of his resolution. He was sitting in his chair, light-headed, and with a violent fever from the excess of pain : I was greatly concerned for him, I never saw him in such a condition before. He desired I would let you know it, and assure you, that the tortures of those who are breaking upon the wheel, are nothing to those he feels for one half his life ; and that he wishes earnestly for death, as the *Coup de Grace*. His night was not at all better.

I have just received your letter, and here am in my room, going to write to you an answer. After coming from any place where I have dined, I fly hither, and if I find a letter from you, I immediately sit down and write : No pleasure is equal to this with me ; so that I languish after the days of the post's coming in. Ah ! my dear child, you would have me read calmly the account of the danger you was in : I have been more terrified if possible, from the letters which I have seen from Avignon and other places, than from those I received from yourself. I perfectly well guess the vexation of M. de Grignan, when he cried out, *Vogue la Galere !*

Upon my word, you are sometimes enough to make one mad ! If you had concealed this adventure from me, I should have heard of it from others, and then I should have been very angry with you, I'll assure you. I shall be very much displeased with M. de Marseille, if he does not grant what we desire of him. For all his fine speeches, I see nothing of the great love he pretends to have for Provence, when he neither does or says anything to put a stop to those 450,000 franks, and makes such a rout about trifles. I am his most humble servant. I am extremely uneasy to know the issue of it. Madame d'Angouleme told me, that she heard you was the most polite person in the world ; she sends you a thousand compliments. I dread my journey to Brittany more than you do. Methinks it will be a second separation, grief upon grief, parting upon parting, absence upon absence : In short, I begin to be afflicted about it in earnest ; it will be towards the beginning of May. As to my other journey, for which you tell me the road is free, you are sensible it depends wholly upon you ; I have devoted it to you, and there is nothing to do but let d'Hacqueville know when it is to take place. Monsieur de Vivonne has an excellent memory to make me such an antiquated compliment ; pray make my respects to him ; I shall write to him in about two years' time. Are you not quite pleased with Bandol ? Pray say a great many civil things to him for me. He has wrote a letter to M. de Coulanges, a letter that is like himself, perfectly amiable. But now let me desire you to take care, and not to lose your money at play, thro' indolence ;

these little losses, if often repeated, are like small showers, which by frequently falling, spoil the roads. I embrace you, my dear child, and beg of you to continue to love me ; and that is the only thing I wish for myself in this world : I have many other wishes with regard to you : In short, every thing with me must be on you, of you, or from you.

LETTER XXXVI

TO THE SAME

Livri, Tuesday in Passion Week, 24 March 1671.

IT is about three hours, my dear child, since I got in here : I set out from Paris with the Abbe, Helen, Herbert, and *Marphise*,¹ in order to retire from the noise and hurry of the world till Thursday night. I propose this as a place of retirement ; I make it my little *Trape*, where I intend to devote myself to the service of God, and to pass my time in numberless reflections. I am resolved to observe a strict fast while here, for many different reasons ; to walk now for all the time I have hitherto kept in my room, and above all to humble myself for the love of God. But what I shall observe stricter than this, is to think of you, my child. This I have not ceased to do since the first moment of my arrival in this place, in so much that being no longer able to contain the sentiments that fill my heart, I am sate down to give a loose to them on paper, at the

¹ The name of a favourite bitch of Mad. de Sevigne's.

end of that little shady alley you are so fond of ; I sit upon the bank of moss on which I have formerly seen you lie. But, good God, what place is there here where I have not seen you ? and how do all these thoughts pass and repass in my mind ? There is not a place, not a spot, in the church, the country round about, nor in the garden, wherein I have not seen you ; and every one of them furnishes me with some fresh subject for remembrance, and presents you in some manner or another to my eyes. I think and think the same things over and over ; my head, my heart, my mind, are all at work ; but in vain I turn my eyes, in vain I search around, the dear child, that I doat on with such fondness, is two hundred leagues distant from me—I have her no longer with me : Then I cannot forbear bursting into tears. This is a great weakness, but I have not the power to resist a tenderness so just and natural. I know not in what disposition you may be when you read this ; chance may direct it to your hand in an unlucky moment, and then perhaps it will not be read with the same spirit in which it is wrote ; if so, I cannot help it ; however it serves at present to ease me, and that is all I expect from it. The condition which this place has thrown me into is scarce credible. I should be glad you would conceal my foibles from others, but you ought to love them yourself, and to respect the tears which flow from a heart that is wholly yours.

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LETTER XXXVII

TO THE SAME

Livri, Holy-Thursday 26 March, 1671.

HAD I shed as many tears for my sins as I have on your account, since I have been here, I should be in an excellent disposition to observe my Easter and Jubilee. I should have passed the time here in the manner I proposed, had not the remembrance of you tormented me more than I thought it would. How strange is the force of imagination ! it represents things as if they were actually present to one ; we look on them as such, and to a heart like mine, this is death. I know not where to hide myself from you. When in Paris, the house there renews my grief every day, and Livri compleats it. On your part, it is from an effort of memory when you think of me. Provence is not obliged to set me before your eyes, as every place here is to present you to mine. I have experienced a kind of joy even in the midst of the grief I have been in here. A deep solitude, a solemn silence, the melancholy office of the day, the devout singing of the *Tenebræ*,¹ and a fast observed with all the strictness the holy church enjoins, added to the beauty of the gardens, which is such as would charm you ; all these together afford me great pleasure. I never passed a Passion-week here before : How often have you wished for it ! but I am obliged to return to Paris ; there I shall meet with Letters from you. I intend

¹ An office in the Romish church.

MARCHIONESS DE SEVIGNE

going to-morrow to hear Bourdaloue, or Mascaron, on the Passion : I always had a great veneration for the nobler passions. Adieu, my dear creature, you will hear no more from me from Livri : Could I have had resolution enough to forbear writing to you from hence, and to have made a sacrifice to my God of the emotions of my heart, it would have been of more value than all the penances that could be imposed : but instead of making a good use of this retirement, I have amused myself with nothing but writing to you about it. Ah ! my child, how weak, how wretched is this in me !

LETTER XXXVIII

TO THE SAME

Paris, Good-Friday 27 March, 1671.

I HAVE received a large packet of Letters from you. I shall answer the gentlemen, when I am less employed in my devotions : in the mean time, embrace your dear husband for me ; I am sensibly affected with his friendship and his Letter. I am very glad that the bridge of Avignon comes all upon the Coadjutor's back ; for I find it was he then that made you pass it. As for poor Grignan, he was resolved to be drowned with you, out of vexation ; choosing rather to die, than live with such unreasonable people : As for the Coadjutor, it is all over with him, in having this fault to answer for, with all the rest. I am extremely obliged to Bandol, for his agreeable relation. But what

LETTERS OF THE

reason, my dear, have you to fear that any other Letter should eclipse yours ? certainly you did not read it over. As for me, who have perused it with the greatest attention, it gave me pleasure that nothing can efface ; a pleasure too great to be indulged on a day like this : you have satisfied my curiosity in a thousand things I wanted to know. I was not sure whether the prophecies relating to Vardes were all false, or whether you had been guilty of any defect in point of ceremony ; I was in doubt concerning the tiresome life you lead ; but what will surprise you is, that with all the aversion which I know you have for story-telling, I did not doubt that your judgment and good sense would shew you, that it may at times be very agreeable, and even necessary.

I am of opinion, that there is no one thing to be absolutely banished from conversation ; and that a just discernment will find opportunities of introducing, by turns, every thing that is proper to make a part of it. I can't conceive why you should say you do not tell a story well ; I am sure I know few that command more attention than yourself : it is not the chief qualification to be wished for indeed : but when there is nothing in it but what is sensible, and free from the offensive or disagreeable, I think one may be pleased to acquit one's self of it in the manner you do.

I heard Mascaron on the Passion, and he made a very fine and affecting discourse : I had a great inclination to go afterwards to Bourdaloue, but for the impossibility of it : places had been kept ever since Wednesday, and there was a crowd enough to

press one to death. I knew it was to be the same sermon that Monsieur de Grignan and I heard him preach last year at the Jesuits, and that was what gave me such a desire to go : it was extremely fine, but it is only like a dream to me. How I pity you in having such a wretched preacher ! but was that a reason for laughing ? I shall be apt to say to you, as I did once before, *What, tired ! Oh for shame !* I never suspected your being very happy with M. de Grignan ; nor, to my knowledge, did I ever expect the least doubt of it ; only I should be glad to hear a word of it from you or him, not by way of information, but only as a pleasing confirmation of a thing I so ardently desire. Without that, Provence would be indeed insupportable ; but I readily believe, Monsieur de Grignan takes no small pains to make you pass your time there as agreeably as possible. He and I feel ourselves much the same about the heart.

Marshal d'Albret has gained a suit he has had depending for forty thousand livres a year, and is put into possession of all that belonged to his ancestors. He has ruined all Bearn : there are twenty families that had sold and made purchases for considerable sums, and are obliged now to restore the whole with interest for a hundred years past. This affair will be attended with dreadful consequences. But farewell, thou little demon ! who divertest my thoughts from every thing else ; I ought to have been an hour ago at the *Tenebræ*.

LETTER XXXIX

TO THE SAME

Paris, Wednesday 1 April, 1671.

I RETURNED yesterday from St. Germain's with Madame d'Arpajon. Every one at Court was asking after you ; among the rest, it will not be amiss, I think, to distinguish the Queen, who advanced towards me, and asked how my daughter was after her affair upon the Rhone : I returned her Majesty thanks for the honour she did you, in remembring you. She then desired me to tell her, in what manner you had like to have been lost : I accordingly began to give her an account of your fine piece of business, in crossing the river in a storm of wind, and that a sudden gust had thrown you under an arch, within an inch of one of the piles, which, if you had once touched, all the world could not have saved you. But, says the Queen, was her husband with her ? Yes, Madam, and the Coadjutor too ; really, said she, they were greatly to blame ; she gave two or three alasses ! while I was talking to her, and said several very obliging things of you. Afterwards, there came in a number of ladies, and among the rest, the young Dutchess of Ventadour, very fine and very handsome ; it was some time before they brought her the divine *Tabouret*¹ ; Ah, says I, turning to the grand master,²

¹ The *Tabouret* is a stool to sit on in presence of the Queen, a privilege never enjoyed but by Ladies of the first Quality.

² The Count de Lude, grand master of the artillery.

why do they not give it her, it has cost her dear enough¹? He was of my opinion. In the midst of a silence in the Circle, the Queen turned to me, and asked me who my grand-daughter was like? M. de Grignan, Madam, replied I; upon which her Majesty gave a cry, and said, indeed I am sorry for it, and added softly, she had better been like her mother or grand-mother; so you see how much I am indebted to you in making my court. Marshal Bellefond made me promise to distinguish him from the crowd: I made your compliments to Monsieur and Madame Duras, and to Messieurs de Charot and Montausier, and *tutti quanti*, not to forget the Dauphin and Mademoiselle, who both talked a great deal to me about you. I likewise saw Madame de Ludre; she accosted me with an excess of civility and kindness that surprised me, and talked in the most affectionate manner of you; when all on a sudden, as I was going to make her a suitable answer, I found she did not mind me, and saw her fine eyes wandering round the room; I presently perceived it, and those who saw me take notice of it, were pleased with me, and fell a laughing. She has been dipped in the sea²: the sea saw all her naked beauties, and is grown, if possible, more proud upon it; I mean the sea, for the pride of the fair one was rather humbled.

I have been extremely diverted with our *hurly-burly* court-heads; some of them looked as if you

¹ Monsieur de Ventadour was not only very ugly and deformed, but, at the same time, a great debauchee.

² See the letter of the 13 March foregoing.

could have blown them off their shoulders. Ninon¹ said that La Choiseul looked as like an inn-keeper's window at spring, as one drop of water to another, a most excellent simile ! But that Ninon is a dangerous creature ; if you only knew how she argues upon religion, it would frighten you. Her zeal to pervert the minds of young people is much the same with that of a certain gentleman of St. Germain's, that we saw once at Livri. She thinks, she says, that your brother has all the simplicity of the dove, he is just like his mother ; but it is Madame de Grignan that has all the life of the family, and has more sense than to be so mighty meek. A certain person thought to take your part, and put her out of conceit with you on that head ; but she bid him hold his tongue, and told him, that she knew more of the matter than he did. What a depravity of taste ! because she knows you to be handsome and witty, she must needs saddle you with the other qualification, without which, according to her rule, there is no being perfect. I am greatly concerned for the harm she does my son in this point, but do not take any notice of it to him. Madame de la Fayette and I use all our endeavours to disengage him from so dangerous an attachment : besides her, he has a little actress,² and all the players of the town upon his hands, and makes suppers, and, in short, leads the life of a devil. You know what a joke he makes of Mascaron. I fancy your Minim³ would suit him. I never saw any thing

¹ Ninon de l'Enclos, famous for her wit and free-thinking.

² La Champmelee.

³ The Priest who preached at Grignan.

more diverting than what you wrote to me about that man ; I read it to Monsieur de la R. F. who laughed heartily at it. He desires me to tell you, that there is a certain apostle who is running up and down after his *Rib*, and would fain keep it to himself, as a part of his goods and chattels ; but unluckily for him, he is not good at following any great undertakings. I fancy *Mellusina* is fallen into some pit, we do not hear a single word about her. M. de la R. F. still insists upon telling you, that if he was only thirty years younger, he should have a great mind to M. de Grignan's *third Rib*.¹ That part of your Letter, where you say he has already had two of his ribs broken, made him laugh heartily : we always wish for some oddity or another to divert you, but we very much doubt that this has turned out rather more to your satisfaction than ours. After all, we pity you extremely, in not having the pleasure of hearing God mentioned in a more becoming manner. Ah, that Bourdaloue ! his sermon on the passion was, they say, the most perfect thing of the kind that can be imagined ; it was the same with that last year, but revised and altered with the assistance of some of his friends, that it might be wholly inimitable : How can one love God, if one never hears him mentioned in a becoming manner ? It absolutely requires a greater portion of grace than is given to every one. We were the other day to hear the Abbe Montmort² ; I never heard a prettier sermon for so young a

¹ That is, to Madame de Grignan, who was M. de Grignan's third wife.

² Afterwards Bishop of Bayonne.

beginner : I wish you had such an one in the room of your Minim. He did not scold his congregation, he did not load us with abuse ; he desired us not to be under any apprehensions of death, since it was the only passage we had to a glorious resurrection with Christ Jesus. We agreed with him in this, and every one went away contented : he has nothing the least shocking in his manner, he imitates Monsieur de Agen without copying him, he has a modest confidence, and a great deal of learning, and seems to be thoroughly religious ; in short, I was highly pleased with him.

Madame de Vauvineux returns you a thousand thanks : her daughter has been very ill. Madame de Arpajon embraces you, and M. le Camus professes himself your adorer ; and I, my dear, what do you think I do ? Love you, think of you every moment, melt into tenderness much oftener than I would, busy myself in your affairs, make myself unhappy about your thoughts of me, feel all your disquiets and chagrins, wish to suffer them for you, if it were possible, and to remove every thing unpleasing from your heart, as I used to do whatever I found superfluous or disagreeable in your room ; in a word, to feel what it is to love another infinitely beyond one's self ; all this I do : This is often an expression of course, and much absurd ; but I repeat it again, and declare as a truth, that I feel it pure, and in its full force.

LETTER XL

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday 3 April, 1671.

HERE are an infinite number of letters for you, which I beg you will deliver properly. I wish the two which are answered may be to your liking ; they were wrote off hand ; for you know I never attempt to mend but I spoil. If we were nearer to each other I might alter them to your fancy, of which you know I always had a great opinion : But what can be done at such a distance ? You have charmed me in writing to M. le Camus : Your own good sense has made you act as if Castor and Pollux had conveyed my thoughts to you. I send you his answer. We laughed very heartily yesterday at M. de la R. F. at the letter your brother sent you. I saw the Duke at Madame de la Fayette's ; he inquired very kindly after you, and desired me to tell you, that he was going to the states of Burgundy, and that he shall judge, by the fatigue of his own entry, what you must have undergone in yours. Just then came in La Marans,¹ she smelled fresh meat. Hear the answers Madame de la Fayette and I made her, without having concerted the least thing of it beforehand, when she desired us to take her with us to spend the evening with *her son*.² You, Madam, will be kind enough to bring me back in your chariot ; speaking to me :

¹ Mellusina.

² So she used to call M. de la R. F.

Pardon me, Madam, I am obliged to stop at Madame du Pui-du-Fou's ; a great lie, for I had been there before : Well, away she goes to Madame de la Fayette ; Madam, says she, I suppose my son can send me back in his equipage ; indeed, Madam, I do not think he can, for he sold his horses to the Marquis de Ragni ; this was another lie, a sale of her own. At last Madame de Schomberg came and took her up : In short, she went off with her little heart ready to burst with rage ; and then Madame de la Fayette and I consecrated our two answers to you, unwilling to omit any occasion of offering a sacrifice to your revenge, in our affronts to her. I took upon me to give you this account, and we join in wishing it may delight you, as much as it did us. I am going to dine *en Lavardin*. I shall finish my letter this evening : I will not make it a long one : I am afraid they are tiresome to you.

Friday Night

I have dined *en Lavardinage*,¹ or rather *en bavardinage*, for I never saw any thing like it, though Madame de Brissac was in one of her best humours, yet she could not supply the want of Monsieur de la R. F. and Benserade.

The King has insisted upon a reconciliation

¹ With Madam de Lavardin. The joke here lies in the similitude of sounds in the two words Lavardinage and Bavardinage, which it is impossible to preserve in English, and means no more than that the afternoon was spent in mere tittle-tattle, or what we call tea-table chat. Bavarder, to talk idly, to babble or rattle.

between Madame de Longueville and Mademoiselle : They met at the Carmelites, and there it was effected. Mademoiselle has given Guilloir fifty thousand franks ; we all wish she had done as much for Segrais. The Marquis de Ambres is at length acknowledged as the other King's Lieutenant of Guyenne, on paying 200000 franks. I do not know whether his regiment¹ is taken into pay as yet, when I do, I will inform you. Adieu, my dearest love, I will not fatigue you, there is reason in all things.

LETTER XLI

TO THE SAME

Paris, Saturday 4 April, 1671.

THIS letter, which is written partly by Madame de Sevigne, and partly by her friend Madame de la Troche, is wholly taken up with describing the new fashion of cutting and curling the hair, which then prevailed among the ladies of the court ; a subject which, however entertaining it might have been at that time, and between the persons concerned in the correspondence, does not appear of consequence enough to merit a translation.

¹ The regiment of Champagne.

LETTER XLII

TO THE SAME

Paris, Wednesday 8 April, 1671.

GOOD God, my dear child, how charming are your letters? there are passages in them worthy of the press; you will certainly find, that some day one or other of your friends will betray you into print. You had been to your devotions, there you found our poor sisters (*of St. Mary,*) and you have got a cell among them; but take care and do not fatigue your mind too much, reveries of this kind are frequently so melancholy, that they almost overcome one. You know we are to pass lightly over some thoughts: You will find a great satisfaction in being at that house, where you seem to be entirely the mistress.

I cannot but admire the customs of your Provence ladies; the description you give me of their ceremoniousness is a finished piece in its kind: but do you know that it would make me just mad, and that I cannot conceive how you put up with it. You imagine that I should do admirably well in Provence: far from it, I assure you I should be downright rude; any thing unreasonable vexes me, and the want of sincerity offends me. I should say to them, ladies, let us understand one another; am I to wait on you back again? If I am, I desire you will not prevent me, nor let us stand wasting our time and breath to no purpose: If it is what you do not desire, pray spare me the ceremony of making the offer. I am

not in the least surprised, if such a way of proceeding puts you out of patience ; I should have still less than yourself.

But a word or two concerning your brother : Ninon has dismissed him. She is weary of loving without meeting a return ; she has insisted upon his returning her letters, which he has accordingly done. I was not a little pleased at their being parted. I gave him a hint of the duty he owed to God, and I put him in mind of his former good sentiments, and entreated him not to stifle all notions of religion in his breast : had it not been for his allowing me this liberty of throwing in a word or two by the bye, I should not have been fond of acting the part of a confidant in this affair. But this is not all ; when one breaks in one way, one thinks to succeed in another. The young Merveille has not broke as yet, but she will soon I believe. I am now going to tell you the reason that brought your brother from the farther end of Paris to me. Yesterday he wanted to acquaint me with a dreadful accident that had befallen him : He had met with a happy moment ; but when he came to the point —— it was a strange thing ! the poor damsel never had been so entertained in her life : The Cavalier, quite defeated, retires, thinking himself bewitched, and what you will find better than all the rest, he could not be easy till he had acquainted me with his disaster : We laughed very heartily at him : I told him I was overjoyed to find him punished in the sinful part. This brought him upon me ; he told me he fancied I had given him some of the ice that was in my composition,

that he did not desire to resemble me in that particular, and that I had better have conferred it on my daughter : He was resolved to apply to *Pecquet* to put him to rights again : He said the most extravagant things in the world, and so did I too ; in short, it was a scene for *Moliere*. But the truth of the matter is, this affair has given such a check to the gentleman's imagination, as he will not presently throw off. It signifies nothing my assuring him, that the empire of love abounds in tragick stories ; he is deaf to all reasoning on this head. The poor *Chimene* says, she sees plainly, that he no longer loves her, and has applied herself elsewhere for comfort : In short, this accident has occasioned a great deal of laughter, and I wish sincerely it may be the means of weaning him from a state so offensive to God, and dangerous to his own soul. *Ninon* told him the other day, that he was *a mere Pompion dressed in snow*. See what it is to keep good company ! one learns such pretty expressions.

Your brother told me the other day of a player, who being resolved to marry, though he laboured under a certain dangerous disorder, one of his companions said to him, " Zounds, cannot you stay till you are cured ? you will be the ruin of us all." I thought there was something very epigrammatical in this turn.

A few days ago, *Madame de Marans* was at *Madame de la Fayette's* ; " Lord bless me, says she, I must have my hair cut : " " Dear Madam, says *de la Fayette*, *roundly* to her, do not do that upon any account, it becomes none but young

people." If that stroke does not please you, let us hear something better of your own.

I have sent you a letter I have received from Monsieur de Marseille : I fancy my answer will be such as you will approve, since you would have it free and open, *and agreeable to that friendship you have vowed to yourself, which is built on interest, and cemented by dissimulation.* This period is in Tacitus : I think I never read any thing more beautiful : I shall therefore adopt this sentiment, and approve of it, since it must be so. Adieu, my love, I think on nothing but you ; and if by a miracle, which I neither desire nor wish, you should for a moment be absent from my mind, I should fancy myself as empty as one of Benoit's figures.¹

Monsieur de Ambres has resigned his regiment to the King for 80000 francs, and 180000 livres, which makes the 200000 francs.² He thinks himself very happy in being out of the infantry, that is the hospital.

LETTER XLIII

TO THE SAME

Paris, Thursday 9 April, 1671.

HERE is Monsieur Magaloti going to set out for Provence : how I long to go with him ! I do not know what pleasure he may take in seeing

¹ An artist very famous for his figures in wax.

² The price that was given for the post of Lieutenant-General of Upper Guyenne.

LETTERS OF THE

you, but I am sure it would be a sensible one to me. He is at play now with my little grand-daughter : He thought you must be very handsome when he saw the child. As for me, who think all the Grignans beauties, I am very well pleased with her. I fancy you will be fond of seeing a man of merit, a man of the world, a man who, if you choose it, will talk French and Italian with you, a man whose accomplishments are acknowledged by all the court, in fine, a man who brings you two pair of *Georget's* shoes ; what can I say more in his praise ? He is going to visit Madame de Monaco, and I will lay any thing you will write to her by him ; he says, that without a letter from me, he despairs of being received by you in the manner he would wish ; in short, he makes a jest of me ; and I envy him, and embrace you most sincerely, and not by way of epistolary conclusion.

LETTER XLIV

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday 10 April, 1671.

I WROTE to you last Wednesday by the post, yesterday by Magaloti, and to-day again I write to you by the post ; but last night I lost a charming opportunity. I went to walk at Vincennes, *en Troche*,¹ and by the way met with a string of galley slaves ; they were going to Marseilles ; and will be there in about a month. Nothing could have

¹ With her friend Madame de la Troche.

been surer than this way of sending, but another thought struck into my head, which was that of going with them myself. There was one *Duval* among them, who appeared to be a man of good conversation : you will see them when they come in, and I suppose you would have been agreeably surprised to have seen me in the thickest of the troop of women that go along with them. I wish you knew of what importance the words Provence, Marseille, Aix, are become to me ; even the Rhone, that devilish Rhone, and Lyons, are something to me. Brittany and Burgundy appear to me like places under the Pole, in which I take no kind of interest : I may say, with Coulanges, *O the surprising power of my orvietan !* Really, child, it was admirable in you to desire the Abbe ¹ to prevent my sending you any more presents ! What stuff ? do I make you any ? do you call the news-papers I send you by that name ? you can never divest me of the desire of giving you, it is the most sensible pleasure I can enjoy. You should rather rejoice with me, if I indulged myself more frequently in it. This method you took of thanking me was highly pleasing to me.

Your letters are excellent, one might venture to swear they were not indited for you by the good ladies of the country where you are. I find that M. de Grignan, to the other connections he has with you, adds that of being your only good companion ; he seems to me the only one who understands you ; be careful to preserve the happiness of his heart by the tenderness of yours, and consider

¹ The Abbe de Coulanges, who lived with his niece Madame de Sevigne.

LETTERS OF THE

that if you do not both love me, each according to your proper degree of estimation, you will be the most ungrateful of people. The new opinion that there is no such thing as ingratitude in the world, for the reasons which we have so frequently discussed, appears to me like the philosophy of Descartes, and the contrary one like that of Aristotle : now you know the deference I always paid to the authority of the latter ; it is the same with respect to my opinion of ingratitude. You would therefore be a little ungrateful wretch, daughter of mine ! but by a particular good fortune, which makes the comfort of my heart, I know how distant you are from any thing of the kind, and for that reason I give myself up without the least reserve to my sentiments for you. Adieu, my dearest love, I am going to close this letter ; I shall write you another to-night, wherein I shall give you an account of the occurrences of the day. We are every day in hopes of having some reason to praise your spouse ; you may think I can forget nothing that relates to you ; I am in that, as the most self interested people are with regard to themselves.

LETTER XLV

TO THE SAME

Friday Night, 10 April, 1671.

I MAKE my packet up at Monsieur de la R. F. who embraces you very heartily ; he is charmed with your answer about the Canons and Father Desmares ; there is some pleasure in sending

you these kind of *Bagatelles*, you have such a pretty way of answering them. He begs you to be assured that you still live strongly in his remembrance, and that if he hears any thing worth your notice he will certainly communicate it to you. He is at his Hotel de Rochefoucault, having no longer any hopes of recovering the use of his feet ; he talks of going to the waters, I am for sending him to *Digne*, others advise him to try those of *Bourbon*. I dined *en Bavardin*,¹ and that so compleatly, that I thought we should have died. We did nothing but tattle, we did not simply talk as we used to do on other days.

Brancas was overturned the other day into a ditch, where he found himself so much at his ease, that he asked those who came to help him out, if they had any occasion for his services. His glasses were all broke, and his head would have been so too, if he had not been more lucky than wise : but all this did not seem to have broke in upon his meditations in the least. I wrote him word this morning that I was willing to let him know that he had been overturned, and was very near breaking his neck, as I supposed he was the only person in Paris that had not heard of it ; and that I took this opportunity of expressing the uneasiness it gave me. I expect his answer. Here is the Countess (*de Fiesque*) and Briole, that send you their compliments. Adieu, my dear, I am going to seal my packet. As I am persuaded you have no doubt of my love and friendship for you, I shall say nothing to you upon that head to-night.

¹ That is at Madame de Lavardin's, who was extremely fond of news.

LETTERS OF THE

MADAME DE FIESQUE

The Countess¹ cannot see a letter going to be sent to you without putting in something of her own, if it is only to compliment you on the addition of the five thousand franks. By what you know of her way of thinking, you will easily judge that she looks upon five thousand franks as a much better subject for compliments than five hundred thousand admirers, and as many fine speeches, which your worth and perfections have procured you.

LETTER XLVI

TO THE SAME

Paris, Sunday 12 April, 1671.

I AM every day writing to you : the pleasure I take in it makes me very propitious to those who request letters of me, without which they do not care to appear before you. I desire nothing better than this. This will be delivered you by Monsieur de . . . I wish I may die if I know his name ; but, however, he is a very worthy man, and appears to me to have some understanding ; we have seen him here ; his face is known to you ; as for my part I have not been able to apply a name to it. Do not go to take pattern by my letters, there is no end to them. Yours have already a dignity that surprises me, I shall never be weary of reading

¹ Madame de Fiesque was known in the polite world by the name of the Countess : Madame de la Comtesse.

them. If Monsieur de Grignan, who says, no one can like long letters, could once have a thought of that kind when he received yours, I would prefer a petition to have you parted, and come myself to fetch you away, instead of going into Brittany. Brancas and I had a quarrel last night ; he pretended I had been guilty of a gross expression relating to friendship that no-body understood, nor I myself, this was crowning the fault ; he flung out of the room in a violent passion. These sort of delicacies are troublesome, I have them not for him, and I have them but too much for a certain charmer, that I adore more than I do my own life, and whom I embrace with all the affection of my heart.

LETTER XLVII

TO THE SAME

Paris, Wednesday 15 April, 1671.

I HAVE just received the letter you sent me by Gace.¹ You talk to me of Provence, as if it was Norway, I always thought it had been warm there ; insomuch, that the other day, which was remarkably sultry, I was very dull upon it : the company thought it was from my apprehension that you was yet more incommoded with heat than myself ; and indeed I could not imagine that to be the case without being concerned at it. And now, my dear, I must tell you that chocolate no longer holds the place in my esteem that it has done,

¹ Afterwards Marshal Martignon.

LETTERS OF THE

the fashion has carried me with it as it always does ; all those who used to praise it to me now run out against it, revile it, and accuse it of all the disorders we feel. It occasions the vapours and palpitation of the heart, it flatters you for a time, indeed, but presently lights up a continual fever, which at length carries you to the grave. In short, my dear, the grand master¹ who used to live upon it is become its declared enemy : judge then, if I can be of any other way of thinking.² Let me entreat you not to think of being an advocate for it, for it is no longer in fashion with the genteel part of the world. I have not seen Gace. Lord ! I believe I shall kiss him. Good God ! A man who has seen you, who has but lately parted from you, and who has even spoke to you ! Your description of Cardinal Grimaldi³ is excellent : *does it sting ?* is excessively merry, and made me laugh very heartily : I wish you had many such to make you do the same. So then, Montgobert knows when to laugh ; she understands your language : how happy is she to have an understanding, and be so near you ! did not Adhemar send you word that the Coadjutor's man, who had been at *la Trape*, was returned almost beside himself, not having been able to undergo the austerities of that place : they are going to

¹ The Count de Lude.

² It was said that the Count de Lude was in love with Madame de Sevigne, but as he was one of those kind of men, whose attachment could never be of prejudice to the character of any Lady, Madame de Sevigne was the first to laugh at it. See the Amours of the Gauls by the Count de Bussi.

³ Archbishop of Aix.

look out for a convent of cotton for him, in order to recover him a little from his present wretched condition. I wish that *la Trape*, in aiming at more than is consistent with humanity, does not by that means become a seminary for vice.

I wept bitterly when I wrote to you from Livri, and weep yet to think on the affectionate manner in which you received it, and the effect it had on your heart. Our two souls corresponded perfectly well, and passed faithfully from Livri into Provence, and back again ; if you feel the same sentiments every time I am sensibly affected about you, I shall have reason to pity you, and advise you to renounce so unpleasant a sympathy. Never sure was any thing so easily awakened as my tenderness for you ; a thousand things, a thousand thoughts, and a thousand remembrances, run through my heart, but always in the manner you could wish ; my memory presents me with nothing but what is gentle and amiable of you ; I hope yours does the same by me. Your letter to your brother is admirable ; you guessed quite right, he has quite the fashionable air about his eyes, but no Easter, no Jubilee for him. The only good thing I know in him is, that he will not commit sacrilege ; indeed, I always endeavoured to persuade him from it : but the disease of his soul is fallen upon his body, and his Ladies are of such a sort that they cannot away with an inconvenience of that nature. God directs all for the best ; I hope the journey to Lorrain will break all these connections. He is very droll upon his disaster, he says he is like old Æson, and is

LETTERS OF THE

resolved to be boiled in a cauldron of herbs, to recover his youth again. He talks all his stuff to me, and then I scold him, and will hear no more, and yet I do for all that. He makes me merry, and does all in his power to divert me. I know he has an affection for me, and professes to be charmed with that you shew for me ; he gives me many rubs upon my attachment to you, which I declare to you, my dear, is greatest when I would most conceal it. And I will confess yet another thing to you, which is, that I believe you love me likewise ; you appear to be solid, and I think your word is to be depended upon, which is one reason of my esteeming you so much. So your Gentlemen begin to be used to you ! poor souls ! but your Ladies have not as yet a taste for you.

LETTER XLVIII

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday 17 April, 1671.

THIS Friday's letter will be a mere matter of nothing ; for, in the first place, I have nothing of yours to answer ; and, in the next place, I have no news to send you. D'Hacqueville was telling me the other day, the kind of things he has sent you, and what he calls news. I laughed at him for his pains, and assured him I should never load my paper with any such idle stuff : For example, he sends you word that it is reported that Monsieur

de Verneuil resigns his government to Monsieur de Lauzun, and takes that of Berri, with the reversion to Monsieur de Sulli ; this is a mere false and idle report, and is not so much as mentioned in any place of credit. He informs you likewise, that the king is to leave Paris the 25th : very pretty that ! I assure you, child, I shall send you nothing but what is absolutely true ; and when I can get no better intelligence than this, I e'en let it pass unnoticed, and entertain you with something else. I am very well pleased with D'Hacqueville, as well as with you. He takes a great deal of care of your mother, in your absence ; and whenever the least dispute arises between the Abbe and me, we always choose him arbitrator. It is a great satisfaction to us to reflect that we have such a friend, who is deficient in no one good or valuable qualification, and consequently can never be wanting in any respect. If you had forbidden us to talk of you, when together, as a thing disagreeable to you, we should be greatly embarrassed : for a conversation of that kind is so natural to us, and we feel so agreeable a propensity to it, that we fall into it as it were insensibly ; so that if by chance, after long exercise on the topic, we for a while turn aside to somewhat else, I begin again in the old strain ; and, " Come ! I say to him, one word about my poor girl ! we are very ungrateful to forget her so long ; " and then we begin anew. If I was to swear a thousand times over to him, that I did not love you, I do not think he would believe me. I value him as a confidant that enters into my sentiments ; what can I say better of him ?

LETTERS OF THE

Helen and *Marphise*¹ are very much obliged to you ; but as for Hebert, poor fellow, he is no longer with me. I took it into my head the other day, in a merry mood, to give him to Gourville, and told him that he must get him a place in the Hotel Conde ; that I was sure he would like him, and thank me for putting it in his power to be of service to him. Monsieur de la R. F. and Madame de la Fayette said much in praise of Hebert ; but there the affair stopped for near three weeks : but yesterday I was greatly surprised by Gourville's sending for him. Hebert dressed himself very genteelly, and went to wait on him. Gourville told him he intended to give him a place in the Hotel Conde, which would be worth two hundred and fifty livres a year to him, besides his board and lodging ; but that at present he should send him to Chantilli, to count out the linen that was used while the King remained there. He accordingly took ten chests of linen under his care, and set out for Chantilli. The King is to go there the 25th of this month, and stay for a day : there will be as great an expence as at the most magnificent triumphs : every curious invention is received, cost what it will ; it is imagined that it will not stand the Prince in less than 40,000 crowns. There will be twenty-five tables of five courses each, without reckoning an infinite number of others, for accidental comers. To entertain in this manner is in fact to lodge and board half the kingdom. Every place is furnished ; little holes, which served only to keep watering-pots in, are converted to apartments fit for courtiers.

¹ A favourite lap-dog of Mad. de Sevigne's.

There is to be a thousand crowns worth of jonquilles alone ; judge of the rest of the expence by that. See, what the mention of Hebert has led me into ! but thus have I made his fortune by a mere joke ; for I look upon it as good as made, as I am persuaded he will acquit himself very well in this first employ. We shall not dine *en bavardin* to-day : They are all in a hurry, sending away the Marquis's (*de Lavardin*) equipage, so I shall take my morsel at home. After dinner, I shall go for a little while to the Fauxbourgs,¹ and if I hear any thing there worth your notice, I shall add it to divert you.

I have read a very pretty Letter from the Coadjutor : he is displeased at nothing but my stiling him *My Lord*, and will have me call him *Pierrot*, or *Seigneur Corbeau*. Let me always recommend it strictly to you, to keep up the good understanding that at present subsists between you. I find he is very sensible of your merit, interests himself greatly in all your affairs, and, in a word, possesses an application and solidity that may be of the greatest assistance to you. My son is not yet cured of that disorder of his, which puts his precious mistresses in such doubts of his love for them. He told me, that during the Passion-week he had led such an abandoned life, as had absolutely given him a distaste to all debauchery : he felt his very heart turn within him at the thoughts of it, insomuch that he could scarce bear to look a woman in the face. This disorder has not been a thing of yesterday : I took my opportunity to read him a little lecture upon it, and we both entered into a train of moral

¹ To Mad. de la Fayette, who lived there.

reflections. He seems to give into my sentiments,¹ particularly now that his distaste is at the height. He shewed me some Letters of his which he had got out of his actress's hands. I never saw any thing so warm and passionate ; he wept, he sighed, he died ; he believed it all while he was writing it, and laughed at it the moment afterwards. I tell you, he is worth his weight in gold, as an original. Adieu, my dear child : How have you done ever since the 6th of this month ? I hope you love me still ; for that is my life, my vital air. I will not tell you that I am yours, that is an expression too poor for a love like mine. You would have me caress the poor Count ; but do we not love each other too well already ?

Friday Night, 17 April

I am making up my packet at Mad. de la Fayette's, to whom I have given your Letter ; we read it over together with pleasure, and think that no one can write better. You flatter her very agreeably, and in looking it over I found a passage in it relating to myself, which went right to my heart ; a place

¹ The Marquis de Seigne passed the latter part of his life in the strictest devotion. He was a man extremely amiable, and possessed of a great share of wit. He was moreover very well acquainted with a number of things, which young men of quality do not always pique themselves upon knowing. The Letters of his which are remaining, are so charming, that it gives one regret they are so few in number. He is known in the literary world by a dissertation of his, relating to a passage in Horace, which gave rise to a dispute between him and Monsieur Dacier ; in which he had the good fortune to get authority and the criticks on his side.

that you keep possession of in a strange manner. Madame de la Fayette was yesterday at Versailles ; Madame de Thianges had sent for her thither ; she was received extremely well, extremely well indeed ! for the King made her get into his own coach with the rest of the ladies, and took great pleasure in shewing her all the beauties of Versailles, just as a private gentleman would shew his country seat to any one that went to visit him. He directed all his discourse to her, and received with a great deal of pleasure and condescension the praises she bestowed on the amazing beauties he shewed her. You may think how agreeable a jaunt of this kind must have been. Monsieur de la R. F. embraces you, without any other form of process, and begs you to believe that he is as likely to forget you as he is to dance a rigadon ; he has a pretty little touch of the gout in his hand, which hinders him from writing you a line in this. Madame de la Fayette both esteems and loves you, and does not think you so void of virtue as the day you lay by her fireside, which you remember so well.

LETTER XLIX

TO THE SAME

Paris, Wednesday 22 April, 1671.

CAN you then really be afraid that I should love Madame de Brissac better than you ? Are you apprehensive, knowing me as you do, that her manners should please me better than yours ? Do

you think her beauty can efface yours ? In a word, can you suppose that there is that person in the world who can surpass Mad. de Grignan in my opinion, abstracted from the interest that I have in her ? Consider all this at your leisure, and you may rest assured that it is just as you will then think it to be. This is all the answer I shall make you, which you will understand by your own, if you answer from your heart.

But now a word or two of your brother, my dear : His folly is really surfeiting ! he is at every creature's disposal. It pleased some gentlemen of his acquaintance yesterday to carry him with them to sup at a certain honourable house. Those gallants were too knowing to run any risque themselves, and so told Sevigne to pay ; I mean, pay with his person ; and notwithstanding the miserable condition he is at present in, he complied with it, and then came and related the whole affair to me, declaring that he was quite sick of himself ; I told him he made me quite sick of him too. I make him ashamed of himself, and tell him that the life he leads is far from being that of the gentleman, and that I made not the least doubt but that he will one day or another smart severely for thus exposing himself. Then I throw in one of my little occasional sermons. He seems to enter into the merit of all I say, while I am talking to him, and then goes on just in the same way as before. He has left his actress¹ at last, after having for a long time followed her every where up and down : When he saw her, or was writing to her, he was quite in earnest : a

¹ La Champmele.

moment afterwards he would make the greatest jest of her. Ninon has quite cast him off ; he was wretched while she loved him, and he is miserable now he knows she loves him no longer, especially as he hears that she does not speak very favourably of him. *It is the merest water-gruel creature !* says she : *His body is no better than a sheet of wet paper, and his heart is as cold as a pompion fried in snow.* But I have told you this speech of her's already. She wanted him the other day to give her the Letters he had received from his actress, which he did. You must know she was jealous of that Princess, and wanted to shew them to a gallant of her's, in hopes of procuring her a small bastinado, or so. When your brother told me what he had done, I represented to him how base it was in him to have a poor creature used ill, merely for having been fond of him ; that I was sure she had never exposed his Letters, as they wanted to make him believe ; but, on the contrary, had returned them all to him again ; that such a treacherous behaviour was mean, and unworthy a man of quality ; and that there was honour to be observed even in those things which were not honourable in themselves. He immediately acquiesced in the justice of my remarks, and ran directly back to Ninon's lodging ; and, partly by cunning, partly by force, got the poor devil's Letters out of her hands again, which I made him burn the instant he came home. You see by this what a regard I have for the name of an Actress. It is a little like the visionary in the play ; she would have done just so. My son has related all his extravagances to Monsieur de la R. F., who

you know is very fond of originals. I told him the other day that Sevigne had not a foolish head, but a foolish heart ; his sentiments are all just, and all false ; all cold, and all heat ; all deceitful, and all sincere : in short, he has a foolish heart. This remark occasioned a general laugh, and my son joined with us in it, for he is very good company ; he always says as the rest do. We are upon a very good footing together ; I am his confidante in form, and bear with that disagreeable quality, which often subjects me to the hearing as disagreeable confessions, purely to have an opportunity of telling him my sentiments upon things. He gives as much credit to me as he possibly can, and begs me to give him my advice, which I do in a friendly manner : He purposes going with me to Brittany for five or six weeks ; and if there is no camp in Lorraine, I shall take him with me. What a deal of stuff is here ! but as you have an interest in it all, I am in hopes it will not be tiresome to you.

What you write about La Marans, and the punishments that will be inflicted on her in hell, is altogether incomparable ; but do you know that you will certainly bear her company thither, if you persist in your hatred to her. Only think of being condemned to her company for all eternity, and that surely will be more than sufficient, of itself, to put you upon making your peace with God, by forgiving her. I am glad I thought of putting you in mind of this ; it is certainly an inspiration from heaven. She came to Madame de la Fayette's the other day, while Monsieur de la R. F. and I were there. In she bounces without any hood on ; she had just

had her hair cut, and was curled and powdered up like a young girl of fourteen : she seemed greatly out of countenance, when she saw us, as she knew she was not likely to come off very well. Accordingly Madame de la Fayette began with her first : " Well, said she, you are certainly beside yourself, Madam : Why, do you know you look absolutely ridiculous ? " " Ah ! said Monsieur de la R. F.¹ *Mother*, my dear *mother*, upon my soul we shall not let you off so easily ; do, come a little nearer, that I may see if you are like your sister that I saw just now." Her sister had just been having her hair cut too. " Indeed, mother, you look vastly well." You know his droll, unconcerned way of speaking upon such occasions. As for me, I laughed heartily to myself : she was so much out of countenance that she could not stand it, but put on her hood, and sat in the pouts till Madame de Schomberg came to take her up ; for there is no other carriage for her but that. I fancy this story will afford you some matter of diversion.

Some days ago we passed an afternoon very agreeably at the Arsenal. There were men of all ranks and sizes : The women were Madame de la Fayette, Madame de Coulanges, de la Troche, Mademoiselle de Meri, and myself. We took our walk, and entertained ourselves every now and then with talking about you, and in tolerable good terms. We go sometimes to the Hotel de Luxembourg. Monsieur de Longueville was there yesterday ; he desired me to assure you of his best services. As

¹ So M. de la Rochefoucault used to call this Lady ; and she used to call him her Son.

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for Monsieur de la R. F. he loves you tenderly. I am overjoyed that you approve of my Letters. I have more pleasure in your approbation and praise, than in all I meet with from others ; and why should daughters like you, be backward in praising a mother like me ? Such an odd respect ! You know what an opinion I have of your taste ! I greatly approve of your lottery : you will let me know what success you have in it. The plays likewise will doubtless afford you some diversion. I would have you amuse yourself as much as possible, I mean as much as Provence can possibly amuse you : I applaud you vastly for not waiting on your ladies back again ; there would have been no end of it ; let them take their revenge, and not see you back again in their turn, and there will be a villainous custom knocked on the head at once. Adieu, my dearest, it grows late. I have a most killing knack at making prose, as you find to your cost.

LETTER L

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday 24 April, 1671.

WE have at present the finest weather in the world ; it began but yesterday, after a long continuance of horrible rains ; this is owing to the King's good fortune, which has been often remarked : This time, however, it happens to be the Prince's good fortune too ; for he had ordered every thing for a spring and summer season, and

such rains as we had the day before yesterday would have overthrown all his measures, and rendered a vast expence he has been at ridiculous. His Majesty got there last night, and is there to-day. D'Hacqueville is gone there too, and at his return will give you an exact relation of every thing that passed. I expect a small account myself this evening, which I will send you with this letter which I am writing, this morning, before I go a *babbling*.¹ I shall make up my packet there ; and if they should say that we make mere weather-glasses of our letters, to tell when it rains, and when it's fair weather, they will not be much in the wrong ; for I think I have expatiated pretty largely on the subject. You do not mention yourself often enough to me, an entertainment I am in as great want of, as you are of a merry story now and then. I heartily wish you partaker of all that I hear ; as for my own, they are no longer worth any thing, since I have lost your assistance. You used to teach me, and I you. It is a tedious melancholy, and too, too often renewed to be at such a distance from a person one loves. I have been taking my leave of our friends for these three or four days past ; the truth of the matter is, that when I set out for Brittany, you will be the sting of parting ; which, if I was deceitfully inclined, I might make some merit of with my friends here ; but indeed they would see through the poor pretence ; besides, I would not, even in appearance, give any one the preference to you, in my sentiments. But it will be a sensible grief to me, to find that it is not sufficient to be already at two hundred

¹ To Madame de Lavardin's.

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leagues distance from you, but that we must be removed yet further by another hundred, and that every step I take will be one towards making up the third. This is too much ; it stabs too home.

Yesterday, while I was at Madame de Richelieu's, the Abbe Tetu came in, and so very gay and airy, as made his most indifferent friends blush for him. I told him of the journey I was about to take : *Well*, says he, with a smile upon his face, *we shall see one another again*. This was not very agreeable to Mandor, but there was no such thing as hearing him talk without laughing. I could get nothing more out of him ; as for my absence, that he seemed to pass over as a matter of very great indifference. We have made it a bye-word now, when ever we take leave of another, and I shall do so in my mind when I think of you, but not in quite so gay a manner, for the length of the absence is a circumstance not easily to be forgotten. Adieu, my dear child, I'll send you some news when I close my packet this evening.

LETTER LI

TO THE SAME

Friday Evening, 24 April 1671.

From Monsieur de la Rochefoucault's.

WELL ! here I make up my packet. I intended to acquaint you that the King got yesterday to Chantilli : He hunted a stag by moon-light, the lamps did wonders, but the fire-works were a little eclipsed by the brightness of our friend ; but, in

fine, the evening, the supper, and the entertainment, went off admirably well. The weather we had yesterday gave us hopes of an end worthy of so fine a beginning. But what do you think I learned when I came here ? I am scarce recovered as yet, and hardly know how to tell it you : Vatel, the great, the ingenious Vatel, late Maitre d'Hotel to M. de Fouquet, and now in that capacity with the Prince, a man so eminently distinguished for capacity, and whose abilities were equal to the government of a state. This man, whom I know so well, at eight o'clock this morning, finding that the salt water he had sent for did not come to the time he expected it, and unable to bear the disgrace that he thought would inevitably befall him, ran himself thro' with his own sword. You may easily judge what a confusion so shocking an accident must have occasioned. Think too, that perhaps the water might come in just as he was expiring. I know no more of the affair at present ; and I suppose you think this full enough. I make no doubt, but every thing was in the greatest confusion ; it must be very disagreeable to have an accident of this kind break in upon an entertainment that cost fifty thousand crowns.

Monsieur de Menars is to be married to Made-moiselle de la Grange-Neuville ; but I don't know how I come to have the heart to speak to you about any thing but Vatel.

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LETTER LII

TO THE SAME

Paris, Sunday 26 April, 1671.

THIS is Sunday 26 April ; and this letter will not go out till Wednesday, but it is not a letter, it is an account that I had from Moreuil, of what passed at Chantilli with regard to Vatel. I wrote to you last Friday, that he had stabbed himself ; you have here the whole particulars of that affair. The King arrived there on Thursday night, the walk, and the collation which was served in a place set apart for the purpose, and strewn with jonquils, were to their wish. They went to supper, but the *Roti* was wanting at one or two of the tables by reason of their having been obliged to provide several dinners more than were expected. This seized Vatel's spirits, and he was heard to say several times, I have lost my honour ! I cannot bear this disgrace ! My head is quite giddy, said he to Gourville, I have not had a wink of sleep these twelve nights, I wish you would assist me in giving orders. Gourville did all he could to comfort and assist him ; but the want of the *Roti* (which however did not happen at the King's table, but some of the other twenty-five) was always uppermost with him. Gourville mentioned it to the Prince, who was so good to go directly to Vatel's apartment, and told him, every thing is extremely well, Vatel, nothing could be more admirable than his Majesty's supper. Your Highness's goodness, replied he,

compleats my unhappiness ; I am sensible that the *Roti* was wanting at two tables. There's nothing in it, man, said the Prince, do not perplex yourself, and all will go well. Midnight came, the fire-works did not succeed, they were covered with a thick cloud, they cost sixteen thousand franks. At four of clock in the morning Vatel went every where about, and found all fast asleep ; he meets one of the under-purveyors, who was just come in with only two loads of water. What ! says he, is this all ? Yes, Sir, said the man, not knowing that Vatel had dispatched other people to all the sea-ports about. Vatel waited for some time ; no other purveyors arrived, his head grew confused ; he thought there was no more water to be had ; he flies to Gourville : Sir, says he, I cannot out-live this disgrace. Gourville laughed at him ; but however, Vatel goes to his apartment, and setting the hilt of his sword against the door, ran himself through the heart at the third stroke ; having first given himself two wounds, which were not mortal. Just at that instant the carriers arrived from all parts with the water ; Vatel was inquired for to distribute it, they ran to his room, knocked at the door, but could make no one answer ; upon which it was broke open, and there he was found stretched out, and weltring in his blood. A messenger was immediately dispatched to acquaint the Prince with what had happened, who was just at his wit's end about it. The Duke wept, for his Burgundy journey all depended upon Vatel. The Prince related the whole affair to his Majesty with great concern : It was looked upon as the consequence of a too nice sense of honour in his way ;

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some blamed him, others praised him for this instance of courage. The King said he had put off this excursion for above five years, because he was very sensible what an infinite deal of trouble it must be attended with : and told the Prince that he ought to have had but two tables, and not to be at the charge of all, and declared he would never suffer him to do the like again ; but all this was too late for poor Vatel. However, Gourville endeavoured to supply the loss of Vatel ; which he did in great measure. The dinner was elegant, the collation the same. They supped, they went a walking, they hunted ; all was perfumed with jonquills, all was enchantment. Yesterday, which was Saturday, there was the same over again ; and in the evening the King set out for Liancourt, where he had ordered a *media-noche*¹ ; he is to stay there three days. This is what Moreuil told me, hoping I would acquaint you with it. M. d'Hacqueville, who was present at the whole, will no doubt give you a faithful relation of all that passed ; but nevertheless I write too, because his hand is not quite so legible as mine, and the reason of my sending you so many little circumstances, is because, were I in your place, I should like them on such an occasion.

¹ Media-noche is a flesh-meal just after midnight, among the Roman Catholics.

LETTER LIII

TO THE SAME

Begun at Paris, Monday 27 April, 1671.

I HAVE a very bad opinion of the weakness you complain of. I am one of those ill-natured sort of people who always think the worst. This is what I was all along afraid of. But, my dear child, if it continues, be careful of yourself in these early days, and do not rout about, and fatigue yourself too much by your journey to Marseilles ; let things be settled a little first ; think of the natural delicacy of your make, and that it has been owing to the greatest care that you went on happily before. I begin to be very uneasy about the interruption our correspondence will meet with in this ugly journey into Brittany. If you find yourself big, you may depend upon it I shall have no other will than yours, and will make it my business to do as you desire, leaving affairs, and every other consideration, a thousand miles behind me. I fancy what I wrote to you about your brother diverted you : He is now a little settled, he sees Ninon every day, but then it is as a friend : He went with her the other day to a certain place, where there were five or six of his comrades, who, as soon as they saw him come in with her, shewed by their countenances, that they looked upon him as sole possessor. Ninon presently discovered their thoughts, and told them, "Gentlemen, you are certainly damned if you

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suspect any harm between us, I assure you we live together like brother and sister." It is certain he is no longer the same man. I shall take him with me into Brittany, where I hope to restore him both body and soul: La Mousse and I have contrived to bring him to a full confession.

Monsieur and Madame de Villars are going to leave this place, they send you many compliments ; they are very desirous of a copy of your picture which hangs over my chimney, to carry with them to Spain. My little girl is every day in my apartment, dressed in all her finery, and does the honours of the house ; a house that puts me continually in mind of you, where you was a prisoner for near a year, that house that every one comes to see, that every one admires, and that no one will *praise*. I supped the other evening with the Marchioness d'Uxelles, the lady of Marshal d'Humieres, Madame d'Arpajon de Beringhen, de Frontenac, d'Outrelaise, Raimond, and Martin, where you was not forgotten. I entreat you, my dear child, to send a faithful account of your health, how you propose to proceed, and what you would have me to do. I am very uneasy at the condition you are in, and am afraid you are the same. I foresee a thousand vexations, and have a train of thoughts in my head, that are fit for neither day nor night.

Livri, Wednesday 29 April

Since I began this letter I have made a pretty little excursion. I set out from Paris yesterday morning ; and went to dine at Pomponne, where I

found our good old man,¹ who expected me. I would not upon any account have gone without taking my leave of him. I found him surprisingly improved in holiness, and his mind seems to grow more pure and enlightened the nearer he approaches to death. He reprimanded me very seriously, and in the warmth of zeal and friendship, for not having as yet thought on my conversion. “ You are a fine heathen indeed, said he, you have erected an idol in your own heart. But this sort of idolatry is to the full as dangerous as any other, tho’ you may perhaps look upon it in a less criminal light ; ” and then concluded with seriously admonishing me to look to myself. He talked to me in so serious a manner, and in such strong terms, that I had not a word to say. In short, after a very sober but agreeable conversation of six hours, I took my leave of him, and came here, where I found May in all its glory ; the nightingale, the cuckoo, and the linnet, have already opened the spring in our woods : I walked alone here the whole evening, where I picked up all the melancholy thoughts I left behind me, and which I shall not mention to you now. I have destined a part of this afternoon to writing to you in the garden, where I am almost deafened by a couple of nightingales that are perched just over my head. I shall return in the evening to Paris, where I shall make up my packet to send to you.

I must confess, my dear, that there is a degree of warmth yet wanting in my love for you : I ought to have set out with the galley-slaves when I met them, instead of contenting myself with barely

¹ Monsieur Arnauld d’Andilli.

writing to you by them. How agreeable a surprise would it have been to you to have met me at Marseilles, in such good company. And so you propose going thither in a litter, what a whim ! I thought you was only fond of litters when you could not get at them ; you are greatly changed since. I declare myself absolutely one of the slanderers, and all the credit I can allow you is to believe, that you never could have been brought to make use of that carriage, if you had not left me, or if M. de Grignan had remained in Provence. How sorry am I for this accident, but I plainly foresaw it : For God's sake then, my dear life, take care of yourself, know that the poor *Guisarda*,¹ by making too free with herself after a favourable lying-in, got such a hurt that she was for three days at the point of death. Let that be a warning to you. Madame de la Fayette is in continual apprehensions for your life ; she makes no scruple of yielding you the first place in my heart, on account of your perfections ; and when she is in a good humour, she says she does it without the least pain, but all that affair is settled and approved ; the justice she does you entitles her to the second place in my love, and she is indeed in full possession of it, tho' la Troche is dying for it ; but I go on at the old rate, not forgetting the journey to Brittany. It is certain we shall lead very different lives, mine will be interrupted by the states, who are all to come to torment me at Vitre, which vexes me horribly. Your brother will be gone before that. You tell me, my dear child, that you wish time to go away faster, you know how matters are with you,

¹ Madame de Guise.

you will find yourself caught ; time will obey you but too exactly, and when you want to stop him, you will find it out of your power. I have formerly been guilty of the very same fault, and have had reason to repent it, for tho' I have not met with quite such bad treatment from him as many others, yet he has made me feel the marks of his passage by the loss of twenty little advantages, which he has robbed me of. So you think your players must needs have a tolerable good understanding to be able to repeat Corneille's lines, there are certainly some of them transportingly fine. I amused myself very agreeably yesterday evening, with a volume of his works that I brought with me here : But are you not greatly pleased with five or six of the fables in that volume of la Fontaine I sent you ? We were quite delighted with them the other day at Monsieur de la R. F. and learned that of the *Monkey and the Cat* by heart. But what stuff am I writing ! Well ! this *Livri* idleness will certainly be the death of you. The note you wrote Brancas is admirable ; he wrote you a whole quire of paper the other day, it was a rhapsody, but tolerably good. He read it to Madame de Coulanges and me, and I told him to finish it against Wednesday, and send it to me. Not I, indeed, says he, she shall not see a line of it, it is such wretched stuff. Well, but said I, what do you make of us ? We have heard you read it, we know what it is. That may be, but she shan't see it, for all that. I could get no other reason out of him ; the man grows more and more foolish every day. What do you think, my dear, of the infinite length of this letter ? I could find in my heart to write till

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this time to-morrow. *Be careful of yourself!* this is the constant burthen of my song, do not get a fall, keep your bed now and then. My excellent choice of a nurse for the dear little one, ought to make you pay a great deference to my advice. Do you suppose I will not come and see you this year? I had indeed ordered matters in a different way, and on your account too, but your little affair has quite disconcerted my measures: How can I help making an excursion this year, if it is never so little your wish? Alas, I may well say, there is no longer any place of rest for me, but that which contains you. Your picture hangs in triumph over my chimney; you are now the object of general adoration in Provence, at Paris, at Court, and at Livri; in short, child, you must certainly become ungrateful, for how can you return all this? I embrace you and love you, and shall ever tell you so, because it will be ever the same. I would embrace that rogue Grignan too, but that I am angry with him.

Poor Paul¹ died about a week ago; our garden is all in mourning for him.

LETTER LIV

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday the 1st of May, 1671.

I KEPT your secret as close as if you had made away with your child, but I wash my hands of it now, since Valcroissant has told it to Mademoiselle

¹ The Gardener at Livri.

de Scuderi, in pluming himself upon the civilities you shewed him, and telling her how much you 're adored in Provence. Well ! my dear, how are you after your Marseilles journey ? Allow me, my dear child, to feel some concern for you, it is impossible to be otherwise.

I dined yesterday at Madame de Villars's, in company with Monsieur de Vindisgras, two of his countrymen, and Monsieur and Madame Bethune. *La plupart des Amans sont des Allemans*,¹ as you see. Monsieur Schomberg seemed to me one of the most charming husbands in the world, exclusive of his reputation as a hero ; his easy manner and excellent understanding make him infinitely agreeable, and indeed his lady perfectly adores him, but because there should be no one absolutely happy in this life, she scarce enjoys a moment's health. We had a great deal of talk about you, and your merit was extolled to the skies ; but what pleased me excessively, was Vindisgras's remembering a thing you said about six years ago, concerning one Count Dietrichstein² being very like Monsieur de Beaufort,³ only that he spoke rather better French : We thought it odd enough that he should have remembered that *bon mot* of yours so long ; this gave us occasion to talk of your wit ; he had seen you when you took your leave of the Queen, and has a very high opinion of your person. Poor Madame de Bethune

¹ Alluding to a song of Sarasius', beginning 'Tircis, la plupart des Amans sont des Allemans, &c.

² A German nobleman.

³ The Duke de Beaufort was remarkable for speaking his mother-tongue very ill.

continues very big, I am really in great concern for her. It is apprehended that the Princess d'Harcourt is with child too. Not a day passes here without something to exercise my fine reflections. Madame de Coulanges came in the evening, and we went together to the Thuilleries, where we saw all the men folks that are left behind in Paris, and they will not be here long ; among the rest was Monsieur de Saint Ruth ; good God ! what a man is that ! the ugliness of his face gives one a high notion of his hidden¹ qualifications. But how shall I describe the kind, the friendly speeches and returns of M. de la R. F., de Segrais, and Mad. de la Fayette, to whom I shewed your letter last night at supper ? There were so many things in it that concerned them, that it would have been doing you great wrong to have concealed it from them. I did not, however, say a word about your pregnancy, that I reserved for Madame de la Fayette's private ear, for the conversation yesterday turned upon discourses much more agreeable for you. Langlade came in, and as he was going to Bourbon, we were desirous that he should call on you. Segrais shewed us a collection of de Blot's songs, that he is going to publish ; they have the devil at the bottom, but in my life I never met with any thing so full of wit and spirit. He told us too, that he had just come from seeing a Norman lady, who had been talking to him about a son of her's, who is an Abbe, and told him, that her son had entered upon preaching till such time as he could compleat his studies. We all laughed heartily

¹ It was said that the Mareschalle de . . . tho' otherwise a very proud woman, had been privately married to him.

at the arrangement of the good lady's words. You remember the *bon mot* of a player that I sent you some time ago.¹ Well, Segrais has given it a place in a collection he is making of all the good things that have been said. There is great news talked of from England, but nothing has as yet transpired. There is no certainty of the King's arrival at Dunkirk. Mad. de Richelieu has gained a great cause against Madame d'Aiguillon. The Duke is set out for Burgundy ; Marshal d'Albret for his government ; and the Prince is gone after the King. You see by all this idle stuff, that there is nothing new stirring to-day. We did not dine *en Lavardin*, all their folks are gone to Versailles.

Madame de Verneuil has been very ill at Verneuil ; d'Escars has had a kind of apoplectick fit, which has greatly alarmed her, and all those who are a little too well in health. I gave your note to Brancas, *Well, well, I shall answer Grignan.* Father Ytier salutes you with all reverence. Were I not quite angry with M. de Grignan, I could find in my heart to love him. Ninon says, that your brother is beyond all definition ; it is certain that he does not understand himself, and others understand him yet less. Farewell, my lovely, never was a stronger natural attachment than I have to you.

¹ See the letter of the 8th of April.

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LETTER LV

TO THE SAME

Paris, Wednesday 6 May, 1671.

I BEG, my dear child, that we may not henceforward give to absence all the credit of having established a perfect understanding between us, nor of having persuaded me of your great tenderness for me : but allowing absence to have had a share in this latter, since it has fixed it beyond the power of change, let us at least regret the time when I saw you every day ; you who are the delight of my eyes, and the only joy of my life, whose wit and understanding strike me with a greater pleasure than I ever yet experienced ; let us not separate the joy of seeing you, and that of knowing your love to me. It would be too great a cruelty to part those two things. No, I will rather believe the time is come that they shall go hand in hand, and that I shall have the exquisite pleasure of seeing you, without the least cloud of chagrin or interruption, and at once make reparation for all my past injustices, since you will give them that name. I saw Madame de Guise yesterday, who loaded me with a thousand expressions of friendship for you, and charged me to tell you of her having been at the point of death for near three days. Madame Robinet was quite out of her latitude, and all this by building too much upon her first lying-in, and having allowed herself in all kind of exercise, without taking the necessary precautions. I promised her to furnish you with all these instructions against you had occasion for them, and to let

you know what she herself suffered from the thought of having been accessory to the loss of her infant, body and soul. I now acquit myself exactly of this commission, in hopes of its being of service to you : Let me conjure you, my dear, to have the greatest care of your health ; you have nothing else to do.

That gentleman of yours, who described my wit just, quadrate, steady, and elaborate, has extremely well *wound up* his definition, as that little devil said. I laughed very heartily at what you wrote me about him, and regretted that you had no-body present when he was giving me such fine encomiums. I should have been glad to have been behind the skreen. I thank you, child, for all your civilities to la Brosse ; what a fine thing is an old letter,¹ I have long thought them worse than old people ; every thing in them has an air of dotage.

It is very true that I dearly love your daughter, but you are a wicked creature to talk to me of jealousy, there is not wherewithal in either of your natures to compose it : It is an imperfection of which you are incapable, and I give you no more subject for it than M. de Grignan does ! Alas ! when one finds one's heart wholly occupied with one dear image that nothing can enter into competition with, how is it possible to give a cause for jealousy, even to jealousy itself ? But let us talk no more of a passion I so much detest ; tho' it springs from an amiable source, its effects are cruel and hateful. In the next place, let me beg of you not to entertain such frightful apprehensions about my health, they

¹ This letter of the 15th of March did not come to hand till six weeks after date.

give you too much concern and uneasiness. I am persuaded you are already too sensible and ready to take the alarm on that subject, you always were so, and therefore I once more entreat of you to follow my example, and give yourself no care about it. I enjoy a health above the reach of common fears. I shall live to love you, that is the whole business of my life ; and I have devoted myself to all the joys, all the sorrow, all the pleasures, and all the torments, and in a word to every sentiment which that passion can possibly inspire me with.

I shall set out between this and Whitsuntide, I shall pass the holydays either at Chartres or at Malicorne, but most assuredly not at Paris. You are too kind to enter as you do, into all the dullness of my journey ; you may easily imagine how often you will be remembered between la Mousse¹ and me, exclusive of the never dying thought of you, that makes so much a part of myself. It is certain I shall not have *Hebert* with me, which I am not a little sorry for, but we must be contented. He is come back from Chantilli, in despair at the death of Vatel, which has been a considerable loss to him : Gourville has put him in possession of that small post in the Hotel de Conde, which I was mentioning to you. Monsieur de la R. F. says, that he is willing to have a connection with the fellow because he looks upon him as a rising man. I told him that my servants were not so fortunate as his.² This

¹ A relation of the Coulanges family.

² Gourville had formerly been a servant to the Duke de la Rochefoucault, and every one knows the character he afterwards appeared in.

Duke of ours loves you sincerely, my dear, and has desired me to tell you, that he shall not send your Letters back unopened. Madame de la Fayette always desires me to say a thousand things to you on her part, I know not how well I acquit myself of my commission.

I desire you will not slight la Fontaine in such a manner, there are some of his fables that will charm you ; the conclusion of his *Oies de Frere Philip*, *les Remois*, and *le petit Chien* ; and every thing in that taste, is vastly pretty, but whenever he quits that style he becomes flat. I wish I could write a fable, to let him see how ridiculous it is to force his genius out of its proper sphere, and what discord is made, when a person attempts to strike all notes at once.

Monsieur de Marseilles has told the Abbe de Pontcarre of your being with child. I have done all in my power for a long time to conceal this accident, but it is too late now, every-body laughs at me. I embrace M. de Grignan a thousand times, notwithstanding all his wickedness, and beg of him that, since he has been the cause of the evil he will at least be at the pains of administering the remedy : I mean by taking all the care of your health that is in his power. Allow him to be master in this, as you ought to be mistress in every thing else. Farewell, my dear, I embrace you with a thousand kisses. Continue to write to me no longer than is consistent with your health, never forget the condition you are in. Answer me not so frequently yourself, but let me hear of you. The longer I am in Brittany, the longer I shall be in want of that consolation ; when

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you are not able to write yourself, make little Deville do it ; but do not let her run into her *do me the justice to believe*, and *I am with the greatest respect* ; let her mention you to me, and nothing but you.

LETTER LVI

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday 8 May, 1671.

HERE am I still ! and shall not be able to set out this week yet. The uncertainty of a camp in Lorraine, which is to determine whether my son goes with me or not, is the occasion of mine, and gives me a good deal of uneasiness ; but I am under more about your health ; I am very uneasy about your journey to Marseilles. A small-pox air, and the roaring of the cannon, gives me but too serious cause for disquiet. You are more obliged to me for forbearing to ease myself of this, by getting nearer to you, than if I was to cross all France after you. My present condition, and that I shall shortly be in, is very hard to bear ; and nothing is capable of stopping me but the reasons that are known to you and I, and our good friend d'Hacqueville.¹ It is some consolation to have such an one witness to my sentiments, not that I stand in need of one with you, but it is a great pleasure to deposite those thoughts which are dearest to one, in the breast of a friend like him.

¹ Meaning the settling the family affairs in Brittany, on the most advantageous footing.

MARCHIONESS DE SEVIGNE

I was a long time yesterday at Madame de la Fayette's ; seriously, that woman doats on you ; and you are under great obligations for the care and concern she feels for you. The Abbe is rejoiced to find you apply yourself to the inspection of your affairs. The instant that you begin to settle your house in a proper manner, that instant you become the immediate object of his care ; add that perfection then to the many others you possess, and be not backward in a thing so laudable : We should not always follow generous sentiments without having a little consideration, a little generosity for ourselves as well as for others ; in a word, continue what you have so well begun, and take pains to preserve your health and regulate your affairs. I hope that the Abbe's journey, whenever it happens, will be to your advantage. Farewell, my dear, I am in the utmost impatience to hear how you do after your journey.

LETTER LVII

TO THE SAME

Paris, Wednesday 13 May, 1671.

I HAVE received your Letter from Marseilles, never was I so much entertained with any account in my life, I read it with the greatest pleasure and attention ; I am sorry to tell it you, as I know you are not fond of hearing it said, but you have certainly a very pretty way of telling a story. My impatience made me at first read your Letter over very quick, but I soon stopped short, as unwilling

to devour it too fast. I read the latter part of it with grief, and for many reasons, for I see nothing but obstacles to your return, tho' it is a thing I so ardently wish for. Ah, my dear child, do not rob me and yourself of all hope ! as for me, I shall certainly come to see you before you can fix any resolution upon that head ; it is a journey necessary to my well-being. I tremble for your health ; you say you was almost stunned with the noise of the cannon, and the shouts of the galley-slaves ; you had all the honours of a Queen paid to you, and I had infinitely more than I am deserving of ; never sure was any thing more gallant than giving my name for the *watch word*. I plainly perceive I am frequently in your thoughts, and that *dear little Mama*, as Monsieur de Vivonne says, passes current still. I fancy Marseilles must appear a very fine place to you, by the extraordinary description you give me of it, which is in itself very agreeable. A novelty of this kind has not its equal ; my curiosity is greatly raised, and I should be glad to see this kind of hell. What ! are there such numbers of wretches groaning night and day under the weight of their chains ? We see nothing of that kind here, we hear talk of it indeed frequently, and now and then see a string of them going thro' our streets, but this is nothing to what passes at Marseilles : The image is very strong in my mind.

*E' di mezzo l'orrore esce il diletto.*¹

You say you looked very well, but what then became of your big belly ? how did that agree with looking

¹ And in the midst of horror gives delight.

well, after so many fatigues ? I have heard from more hands than one, that you have so good, so just, so clear, and so solid an understanding, that you are referred to in the most important affairs. It seems that you accommodated that perplexed business that was between Monsieur de Monaco and another person, whose name I have forgot. Your sense is so clear, so much above the common level, that your beauty is forgot in praising your wit ; that is what is said of you here. If you should find some Prince Alamir, you have all the rest in yourself to make the first volume of the romance. I was unwilling to do Provence so great an injustice as not to let you know how much you are honoured there, and in what a manner they speak of you. I want to know if you are yourself quite insensible to all the honours they do you ; as for me, I assure you roundly, that they would not be displeasing to me. If you are still at Marseilles, I desire you will make my compliments to the General of the Galleys.¹ But you will be gone by this time. As for me, I am here still, at which I am almost mad : I intended to have set out last Friday, but the Abbe was almost upon his knees to have it put off till Monday. There is no getting a priest out of Paris ; none but the women are for leaving it. I shall go on Monday. I fancy you will be glad to know my travelling equipage, that you may see me go along as I used to see Monsieur *de Busche* ; I shall have two coaches, seven coach-horses, one sumpter horse for my litter, and three or four men on horseback : I shall be in my own coach, drawn

¹ Monsieur de Vivonne.

by my two beautiful horses : The Abbe will be sometimes with me. In the other, which will have four horses and a postilion, will be my son, La Mousse, and Helen ; sometimes the ecclesiastical Breviary will fall into the second rank, and give place to one Corneille's Breviary which Sevigne and I shall have a mind to say. Here is a parcel of curious particulars ; but they please, when coming from those we love.

I shall not take any notice to our ocean of the preference you give it ; it will make it too proud, and it is but too much so already. Numbers leave Paris on Monday, as well as myself. I do not know whether it is true or no, that Brancas is gone already, for he has taken no leave of me ; I suppose he thought he had. The other evening, at Madame de Coulanges's, when supper was brought in, and we were all sat down, he continued standing bolt upright at one end of the table. Sit down, said I to him : sit down, can't you ; you 'll sup, I suppose. But still he continued standing. Madame de Coulanges desired him to sit down : Faith, says he, Madame de Sanzei makes us wait for her strangely ; surely they have not told her that supper is upon table : for he was waiting all the while for Madame de Sanzei ; and she, you must know, has been at Autrui these five weeks. This piece of complaisance of his set us all a laughing. Madame de Soubise is with child : she has complained to her mother of it, poor thing ! but to no purpose. As for Madame de Louvigni, you know how it is there. I wish I knew some good widow who was so too, I would acquaint you with it for your comfort. The

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Abbe Tetu is set off ; he says Paris grows insupportably dull to him ; he is gone directly to Fontevraud, it is all in his way ; from thence he goes to Richelieu, which is not above five leagues farther, and there he 'll stay. This journey of his is laughed at by many people, as carrying him still farther from his bishoprick ; but I say it is the nearest road he could take to it. You see he is not quite so easy about the absence of Madame de Fontevraud, as he was about yours. If I was but a little nearer to you, I would take your way of telling things ; it is a thousand times more clear and intelligible than the hotch-potch stuff I make use of : however, you have unravelled my meaning excellently well ; what is there too difficult for you ? You think my son's company will comfort me for the amusements of Paris, and that the states will comfort me for the loss of my son. But what, my fair one, is to comfort me for your absence ? I have not hitherto found that thing in the world that has the least pretence to do it.

LETTER LVIII

TO THE SAME

Paris, Friday 15 May, 1671.

I AM still here, my dear child, in all the vexation that attends delayed journeys, and journeys that carry us still farther from a beloved object. But what a madness it is to take a road so different to one's heart ! If I should ever live to see all distance removed between Provence and me, I shall be trans-

ported with joy. The continual desire I have of receiving your letters, and knowing the state of your health, so preys upon my heart, that I wonder how I am able to support it. I expect to hear from you on Sunday, and on Monday I shall set out. I am employed in giving all the necessary orders in having your letters conveyed to me as frequently and speedily as possible, and I hope I shall succeed to my wish.

Madame de Crussol is with child, and a hundred others besides. I went yesterday to take my leave of her, and of the shadow of Madame de Montausier. Had I time, I would relate all the genteel things she said to me : but I have had my hands full this morning of farewells and business ; I am going to take mine of Lavardin. I shall make my packet up this evening, and then I shall be more at leisure.

*Friday Evening, 15 May, from Monsieur
de la Rochefoucault's.*

I am now with a man who loves you, and begs you to believe it. He was greatly delighted in hearing me read your description of the galleys at Marseilles. Madame de la Fayette is dictating a number of fine things to me, which I shall not tell you. We have been taking a walk to Faverolle a l'Issi, where the nightingale, the white-thorn, the lilachs, the fountains, and the fine weather, afforded us all the innocent pleasures our hearts were capable of tasting. It is a place where I have seen you. Oh what food for my tenderness ! If you remember, we saw a cat there once that had like to have torn out la Fayette's eyes. I have bid farewell to all the

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beauties of this country : I am bound to one far more rude ; but there is no spot, my dear child, where you are not the sole object of my thoughts. I have recommended my dear little girl to Madame d'Amelot and Madame d'Ormisson, but particularly to Madame du Pui-du-foi, with whom I spent almost the whole day yesterday. She has promised to take as much care of her as if she was her own. I have taken my leave of the d'Usez and a hundred others. Monsieur de Rambures is dead : Can you figure to yourself his afflicted widow¹ with her crape fillet.² The Abbe de Foix is dying : he has received all the sacraments, and is in his last agonies. I have received a letter from Corbinelli ; he appears to be extremely content with Monsieur de Vivonne, and his liberality. If you write now and then to Vardes, I desire you will let him know this, that he may see how far his friend is from being ungrateful. Good night, my little one ; we are dull, we have nothing merry to send you. If you love to be perfectly beloved, love the love I have for you.

LETTER LIX

TO THE SAME

Monday, 18 May 1671. Just going to set out.

AT last, my dear child, I am just ready to get into my coach ; there !—I am in :—farewell !—I never shall speak that word to you without

¹ N . . . de Beautru, Marchioness of Rambures.

² In those days the widows wore a fillet over their foreheads like the cloth ones worn by the Nuns.

the most sensible grief. I am now on my way for Brittany ; and is it possible then there should be any thing to increase the distance between us, when we are already separated at above two hundred leagues from each other ? But so it is, I have found a way to compleat it, and as you thought your town of Aix not quite far enough from me, I, for my part, look upon Paris as too much in your neighbourhood. You went to Marseilles to fly me, and I, to pay you in your own coin, am going to Vitre. But to be serious, my dear, I suffer much by this gap in our correspondence ; it used to be my greatest consolation and amusement. Alas ! what shall I have to say to you from the midst of my woods ? I must entertain you with nothing but Mademoiselle du Plessis and Jaquine,¹ the charming subjects ! I am very happy in what you tell me of your health, but in the name of God, if you have any love for me, take care of yourself, do not dance, do not fall, rest yourself frequently ; and above all things, order matters so as to lie-in at Aix, where you may have the best and most timely assistance. You know how expeditious you are on those occasions ; be sure to have all ready rather too soon than too late. Good Heaven ! what shall I not suffer when that time comes.

You relate the dispute you had with our friend Vivonne very agreeably. I think the fault lies entirely on his side : you carried it on swimmingly in the manner you behaved ; his confusion made me sweat for him, and he did so himself, I dare say :

¹ A pretty servant girl of Mad. de Sevigne's, at her house in Brittany.

but in the end you made it up and embraced him ! a vast¹ undertaking that, for one in your condition ; if it must end in this you ought to be very cautious how you make yourself enemies, and cause yourself all this trouble.

The poor Abbe de Foix is dead : what a melancholy affair is this ! who would have thought that a woman, who, but the other day, saw herself the mother of three sons, and the eldest of them married, should now be at the point of seeing her house extinct. But nothing is more true, for I would not give a farthing for the life of the Duke de Foix : he is at present at Bordeaux with his mother, carrying on a law-suit, what news will this be for them ! The fair Armentiere makes war on her beautiful locks, and beats her breast, I see this will comfort you. Do you know that our little Senneterre² is brought to bed at Grenoble ? I do not know how many people are going away to-day. Yesterday we counted no less than twenty persons of quality who were all going to do like me. Monsieur de Coulanges made a grand supper on my account, where there was every body present to take their leave of me. Well, adieu, my most lovely and best beloved, I am going to lie at Bonnel, where I hope to find that spirit of devotion which you left there some time ago ; if so I will make the most of it ; for, alas ! I shall stand in need of it to make me support with patience this separation from a child I so passionately love, and all the fears I feel concerning her health : think

¹ Monsieur de Vivonne was remarkable for his great bulk.

² She was a Longueval, and mother to Madam de Florensac, who had M. de Crussol, and the Dutchess of Aquillon.

then, what I must suffer, with nothing to divert me from giving a full scope to my thoughts. I take your brother with me, and by that means take him from all the shame his foolish conduct had brought upon him. You may suppose his mistresses will not be inconsolable for his loss ; I fancy I shall do very well with him. I am now fully persuaded of what M. de Grignan says. Ah ! my dear Count ! I firmly believe you, there is no person but what would have done just the same as you did, had they been in your place : you give good reasons for every thing, and make your defence in such a manner that I must forgive you ; but, however, you ought to reflect, that the youth, beauty, health, good spirits, and perhaps life of the woman you love, may be destroyed by too frequent returns of the ills you are the author of. But now, my dear girl, taking my leave of your husband, I return to you. It has reached our ears, that you both of you constantly lose whatever you play for. Bless me ! whence arises this ill luck ? what is the reason of these continual small showers that I have always found so prejudicial ? but I am as incessant as the showers I am speaking of, and never know when to have done. Farewell then, for the hundredth time, farewell, my dearest child : give d'Hacqueville many thanks for the daily acts of friendship I receive at his hands, he enters into my sentiments ; that is the thing that we most want in this world. Do not forget to acquaint Vardes, how much Corbinelli speaks in his praise.

LETTER LX

TO THE SAME

Malicorne, Saturday 23 May, 1671.

I AM just got hither, where I found a letter from you, such care have I taken to keep our correspondence open. I wrote to you last Monday, my dear child, just as I was going to set out ; since that, I have been continually going farther and farther from you, with such grief of heart, and so lively a remembrance of you, as sometimes made thought absolutely insupportable to me. I have brought your picture with me, in my pocket, which I am every moment gazing upon. I fancy it would be no easy matter to steal it from me without my missing it ; it is a charming piece ! my mind is full of your dear idea, and my heart of the most unbounded tenderness ; this is the equipage I travel with, and thus attended am I going three hundred leagues from you. We have been greatly incommoded with the violent heats. One of my fine horses is left behind at Palaiseau, the other six have held out very well so far.

We set out in a morning before two o'clock, to avoid the heats. To-day again we were in these woods before Aurora was stirring, in order to see *Sylvia*, I mean Malicorne. Here I found the two little wenches,

With phizzes grim and air demure,
And screaming voices——¹

¹ Rechignees, un air triste, une voix de megere.

Said I,

These are our neighbour's young ones sure !
Let us avoid them—— ———¹

But however,——

Our meals are not of airy kind ;²

For I never met with better cheer any where, nor a more agreeable house : I stood in need of all the water the place afforded, to refresh me after the melting heat I have suffered this week past. Our Abbe is very well ; my son and la Mousse are great comforts to me. We have gone over Corneille again and again, and admired him with as much pleasure as ever. We have likewise got a new book of Nicole's with us. The matter is much the same with that of Pascal's, *and the education of a Prince*, but such matter as there is no being weary of. We shall get to *the Rocks* the 27th, where I shall meet with a letter from you ; the greatest joy I can have. For the future you need write to me but once a week, for they will set out from Paris only on Wednesdays, and so I shall have two at once. Methinks I am robbing myself of one half my treasure, but nevertheless I will make myself contented, as it is so much trouble saved to you in your present condition. For God's sake, my dear, take care of yourself, if you have the least regard for me.

¹ Ces petits sont sans doute a notre Ami
Fuyons les —— ——

² Nos repas ne sont pas repas a la legere. See La Fontaine's Fable of the Eagle and the Owl (L'Aigle et le Hibou).

Oh ! what a concern am I in about that dear person of yours. Will you never have a moment's rest ? must your whole life be thus worn out with continual fatigue ? I perfectly well understand M. de Grignan's reason, but, upon my word, if one loves a wife one is very apt to have a little compassion for her.

My fan it seems came quite *a propos*, don't you think it very pretty ? But what a trifle ! do not deprive me of this small pleasure when I can have an opportunity of enjoying it, you should rather thank me for indulging myself in it, though with such baubles. Let me hear a good deal about you, that is the main point with me. Remember I am to have a letter from you every Friday ; but remember at the same time, that I cannot now see you ; that you are a thousand miles distant from me ; that you are with child ; that you are in a bad state of health. Reflect,—no, reflect not upon any thing, leave the business of reflection to me in my long shady allies, whose dreary melancholy will add to mine ; I may walk there long enough before I shall find what I had with me the last time I was in them. Adieu, my dearest child ! you do not mention yourself often enough to me : be always exact in observing the dates of my letters. Alas ! what amusement can they afford to you now ? My son embraces you a thousand times : he helps greatly to amuse me : he does all in his power to please me ; sometimes we read, sometimes we chat, as you know how ? La Mousse contributes his part, and our Abbe as much as the best of them ; we all adore him because he adores you. He has at last left me his whole

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fortune,¹ he had not a moment's rest till that was done ; do not mention this to any one, the family would be all upon his back if they heard it : but love him dearly upon my recommendation, and love me too upon the same. I embrace that rogue Grignan, notwithstanding all his crimes and misdemeanors.

LETTER LXI

TO THE SAME

From the Rocks,² Sunday 31 May, 1671.

AT last, my dear child, I am got among my Rocks ; can I behold these walks ? can I see these ornaments, the little closet, the books, this room, and not die with grief ? some recollections are agreeable, but there are others again so sharp and affecting that they are hardly supportable, such are mine with respect to you. And you may easily guess the effect this is likely to produce in a heart like mine.

If you continue pretty well, my dear, I believe I shall not come to you till next year. Brittany and Provence are not very compatible, long journeys are strange things : if we were always to continue in the same mind we are in, after coming off one, we should never stir from the place we were then in :

¹ Madame de Seville was the favourite niece of the Abbe de Coulanges, and as he passed the greatest part of his life with her, nothing could be more natural than his leaving her his whole fortune at his death.

² The name of Madame de Seville's estate in Brittany.

but Providence in kindness to us makes us forget it ; it is much the same with lying-in women, Heaven permits this forgetfulness that the world may be peopled, and folks should take journies to Provence. That which I shall make thither will afford me the greatest joy I ever received in my life, but how cruel a thought is it to see no end to your stay ! I more and more admire and applaud your prudence, though, to tell you the truth, I am greatly affected with this impossibility, but I hope time will make us see things in a different light. We must always hope, for without that consolation there would be no living. I sometimes pass such melancholy moments in these woods, that I return as changed as one just out of a fever. I fancy you pass your time pretty well at Marseilles. Do not forget to let me know in what manner you was received at Grignan. The people here had designed to make a kind of triumphal entry for my son ; Vaillant had drawn out near 1500 men under arms, with new cockades in their hats, and had marched them within a league of the Rocks. But guess what happened ! our Abbe had wrote word that we should be there on Tuesday, and afterwards quite forgot to take any notice of it to us. Accordingly these poor people were waiting under arms the whole day till ten o'clock at night, when they returned home again very much chagrined at their disappointment ; and behold the next day, which was Wednesday, we came in as peaceable as lambs, without once dreaming that there had been a little army out to meet us. We were a good deal vexed at this mistake, but there was no help ; so much for our first setting out however.

Mademoiselle du Plessis is just as you left her, she has got a new acquaintance at Vitre that she plumes herself mightily upon. You must know she is a great genius, has read all the romances ; and, what is more, has had two letters from the Princess de Tarante. I was mischievous enough to set Vaillant upon telling her that I was jealous of this new friend of hers, and that, when I heard of their connection it had given me the greatest uneasiness, tho' I had taken no notice of it to her. It requires the pen of a Moliere to describe all she says upon the occasion, and it is highly pleasant to see how artfully she manages me, and with what dexterity she avoids speaking of my supposed rival before my face : I play my part pretty well too. My little trees are grown surprisingly beautiful ; Pilois¹ is raising their stately heads to the clouds. In short, nothing can be more beautiful than these walks which you first saw planted. You may remember I once gave you a little device which was thought very suitable. Here is a sentence which I wrote the other day upon a tree which I intend for my son, who is just returned from Candie. *Vago di fama.*² Is it not pretty for so short a thing ? Yesterday I had another inscribed, in honour of the Loiterers, *bella cosa far niente !*³ Ah ! my dear child, what a savage air have my letters ! Where is the time when I used to talk of Paris like other people ? now you will hear of nothing but myself, and to shew you what a confidence I have in your affection, I am persuaded

¹ The gardener at the Rocks.

² Anxious for Fame.

³ What a fine thing it is to do nothing.

these will be the most agreeable to you of any. I am highly pleased with my company here. Our Abbe is at all times an excellent companion. La Mousse and my son are very well contented with me, and I with them : We always seek one another out, and if business at any time takes me from them, they are at their wits' end, and think it very odd in me to prefer a farmer's tale to one of La Fontaine's. They are all passionately fond of you : I fancy you will hear from them. As for me, I choose to be beforehand, for I do not love talking to you in a crowd. My dearest girl, will you love me ? my life depends upon your friendship ! that, as I told you the other day, makes all my joy or all my sorrow. I declare to you that the greatest part of my life is embittered with the cruel thought that I must of necessity pass so much of it at a distance from you.

LETTER LXII

TO THE SAME

The Rocks, Sunday 7 June, 1671.

I RECEIVED your two letters with a joy that no tongue can well express. That which you wrote to my son is not dressed in snow, believe me it is dressed in salt, and that in large quantities ; it is a finished piece from beginning to end : I leave him to answer it, and to acquaint you how he has succeeded in his parish, and at the ball at Vitre. We read Bertrand du Guesclin through in four days, which gave us a good deal of diversion. But you

are under a mistake, child, my coach did not break down on the road, my springs were forged by the hands of Vulcan himself, or they could never have held out a third journey into Brittany : What you mean, is, that one of my horses, the finest creature in the whole kingdom, was left behind at Nogent, and, as I have been informed, has died there since, that is what led you into the mistake. Indeed I had a troublesome fit of the cholick some time ago ; but I admire d'Hacqueville's telling you, that I did not acquaint him with it. The joke of the matter is, that he was guilty of a fault on that occasion ; and as he had engaged to be quite perfect, he would not push his justification with me, and endeavours to acquit himself with you, by laying the blame upon me, but I never can be wanting in any point of friendship to him, for I have too great a value for him, and his friendship is an inestimable treasure. I will tell you how the thing was. I went to church with my aunt in the coach, and by the way found myself very sick : I was apprehensive of what would follow, and so drove back directly : When I got home, I vomited violently ; an excessive pain seized me in the left side, the vomiting still continued, and the pain grew worse and worse, attended with a great costiveness : The alarm was presently given, *Pequet* was sent for directly, who took very great care of me ; an apothecary was sent for likewise, he ordered me a half-bath ; people were dispatched away for the herbs to make it with : If I had had twenty servants, they would have been all employed. I never once thought of Madame de la Fayette. The young woman which we keep for tapestry work, and

who was then gone to work at her house, told her the condition I was in : In she came while I was in the bath ; she told me what had brought her, and that she had met a footman of d'Hacqueville's, and had told him how ill I was, in the certainty that his master would come to see me the moment he heard of it. Well, one day passed over in this manner, without my colick being any thing better : The next night I was very bad : No news all this while of d'Hacqueville : I could not but feel this neglect of his ; it gave me some uneasiness, and I could not help speaking of it. The morning afterwards I was somewhat better, and in these cases to be better and to be cured is much the same thing. Then Monsieur d'Ormesson came in a great fright, having been told, as he said, by d'Hacqueville that I was very ill, so the gentleman knew it then. In the evening I sent him a kind of plaintive billet-doux, which confounded him a good deal : He made, when he came, a great many trifling excuses : I convinced him that I had not sent to Madame de la Fayette. He did not take much notice of what he had said to Monsieur d'Ormesson, which was the thing that made strongest against him, which I observing, did not push it much myself, but admitted his excuse, that he did not know of my illness till he had my note. Here now is a mighty entertaining story, and extremely necessary to be sure ; but, however, it is all truth. My dear child, if this long-winded story has not quite tired you, you must be in excellent health : Well ! I make an oath of never making such a long one again.

You say you saw a poor wretch that was going to be broke upon the wheel. He behaved better, it is to be hoped, that one Count Frangipani, who was executed about two months since at Vienna, for having been engaged in a conspiracy against the emperor. This Frangipani found himself so unable to undergo the shame and horror of a publick death, that they were forced to drag him to the place of execution, and hold his legs and arms till the executioner did his office. Just in such a manner should I behave upon the like occasion. But now we are talking of punishments, I must tell you one that will make you shudder. Monsieur du Plessis had a small complaint in both his feet of the same kind with that you once had in one of yours : Instead of treating it in the same manner as Charoe did yours, he met with a very skilful man, *a wonderful man !* said Madame du Plessis, who proposed a pretty little anodine medicine of his own ; and what was that, think you ? Why, to tear out the nails of his two great toes by the quick, in order, as he very sagely observed, to prevent the disorder from returning again. The poor man was confined to his bed with this gentle operation, when we came here ; he walks about a little now, but it is in a very tottering manner. As for Mademoiselle du Plessis, she is the same extraordinary person as ever : She had heard say, it seems, that Monsieur de Grignan was the *prettiest fellow that one would wish to lay one's eyes upon* : Only think you hear her say that in her tone, and you will be ready to give her another box on the ear.¹ I am sometimes unfortunate enough to say a thing that

¹ See the letter of the 26th of July following.

pleases her : I wish you was to hear her praise and mimick me : She has retained some good things of yours too when you was last here ; these she gives us over again with the same grace. Ah me ! if I had nothing stronger to put me in mind of you than that, how happy should I be !

Pomenars¹ has constantly some action or another against him, and never for any thing less than his life. He was soliciting a cause the other day at Rennes, with a violent long beard ; he was asked by somebody, why he did not get himself shaved ? “ Who, I ? said he, I think I should be a very great fool to give myself any trouble about my face, till I know who my head belongs to : the King disputes it with me at present, when the affair is decided, if it belongs to me, I will be at some pains about it.” This is the pathetick manner in which he endeavours to bespeak the compassion of his judges.

You will see by the Bishop of Marseilles’ Letter, that we are still upon a friendly footing : I believe I have had the very same Letter ten times over : He does not run into *the justice to believe*, but he desires me to be persuaded *that he is with an extraordinary veneration the Bishop of Marseilles*, and I take him at his word. Keep up the friendship that is between you ; do not take off the mask, nor be at the trouble of having an enmity upon your hands, it is a greater burthen than you can think. What a

¹ A gentleman of Brittany, of whom it is said, that having had an action brought against him for uttering false money, and being cleared on his trial, he paid his fees and charges in the same species. See the letter of the 26th and 29th of July following, and the article Bouille in the Memoirs of Amelot de la Hussaie.

piece of presumption to have your picture drawn ! I assure you I am heartily well pleased with it, it is a magazine of oddities, but he does very well here in his place. We have now and then a few serious conversations which might be of some advantage to him, but his mind is rather too light and frothy ; was it not for that, he would be an amiable young fellow. Your Italian, pray have you forgot it ? I read a little now and then, by way of keeping it up. You say then that M. de Grignan embraces me. You lose your manners, my dear Grignan ; but come and play a little in my mall I beg of you, it is at present the most charming weather, and I do long to see you play, you do it so genteelly, and make such pretty strokes. Indeed it is very cruel of you to refuse me an hour's walk only. Come you then, my dear girl, and let us chat a little together.

LETTER LXIII

TO THE SAME

The Rocks, Wednesday 10 June, 1671.

I AM going to entertain you to-day, my dear, about the rain and fine weather. I had not your Letters till Friday, and I answered them the Sunday following. I begin then with the rain, for fair weather is out of the question here. For this week past it has rained incessantly, I say incessantly ; for the rain has only been interrupted by storms. I cannot stir abroad, my workmen are all dispersed, and I am devoured with melancholy : La Mousse

too is very low spirited : We read indeed, and that just keeps us alive. My son is gone to Rennes, whither we thought it necessary to send him, to pay a visit to the first President, and several other friends that I have there ; if he has time, I shall prevail on him to go and see Monsieur de Coetquen, he is old enough now to do these kind of things. There was a ball at Vitre again last Sunday. I am very much afraid that my son will grow fond of the company of ten or a dozen chaps that supped with him the other night at the castle of Sevigne ; he should bear with them indeed, but he should be very cautious how he grows fond of them. There happened a quarrel at that entertainment about some trifle or another : The lie was given ; to it they went, the company endeavoured to part them, there was a great deal of talk, and very little sense : However, Monsieur le Marquis¹ had the honour of making up the difference, and afterwards set out for Rennes. There have been great cabals at Vitre : Mademoiselle de Croqueison complains of Mademoiselle du Cernet, that the other day, at a ball, she did not offer her part of some candied oranges she had. We must hear Mademoiselle du Plessis and the Launayes on this head, as they are possessed of all the circumstances relating to it. As to Mademoiselle du Plessis, she lets all her affairs at Vitre run to ruin, because she will not set her foot in it, out of fear of giving me jealousy, on account of her new friend ; and it was but the other day, that, to make me quite easy, she said as many ill-natured things of her as she could. When it is fine weather, this nonsense

¹ Meaning her son the Marquis of Sevigne.

makes me laugh ; but when it is bad and gloomy, I could give her one of your slaps. Madame de Coulanges writes me word, that she has heard nothing of Brancas, only that, out of his six coach horses, he has but one left, and that he was the last person that found it out : But this is nothing new to me : Our little Alegre is at her mother's : It is thought that M. de Seignelai is to be married to her. I suppose you are in no want of folks to furnish you with intelligence ; as for me, I despise such little incidents, I am only for those that surprise and astonish : Such an one I met with this very morning, while the Abbe and I were in his study together, we found, in reckoning with those counters of his, which are so good, that with all that has fallen to me, I ought to be worth 530000 *livres*¹ : Do you know, that what our dear Abbe has left me, will not amount to less than 80000 francs ? And do you think I am not impatient to be in possession ? And 100000 francs from Burgundy ; this has come since you were married ; the rest, viz. 100000 crowns by my marriage, 100000 crowns since by M. de Chalons, and 20000 francs, in little legacies, from one or two of my uncles ; but do not you wonder whither my pen is running with me ? I should do much better to tell you what I suffer every day, when I reflect in what places Providence has destined us to pass our lives. This is a continual source of uneasiness to me, but let it not be the same with you, you have not the same reason, you are with a husband that adores you, there is nothing

¹ Upwards of 20000l. sterling, reckoning a livre at 10d. half-penny.

wanting to your splendor : but endeavour, if possible, to work some miracle in your affairs, so that your return to Paris may be retarded only by the duties of your post, and not from necessity. It is very easy to talk thus, I wish it was as easily carried into execution ; and wishes are not forbidden us. They write me word, that Madame de Valavoire is at Paris, and that she is for ever talking of your beauty, politeness, wit, capacity, and, in short, of the new head-dress you have invented, which it seems you have executed as if you had been in the midst of the court : Madame de la Troche and I have at least the honour of having described it so well as to put you in the way of performing these wonders : She is at Paris still, that Troche : She is to set out for her own house about the latter end of this month. As for me, I do not know what the estates intend doing ; but I fancy I shall run away for fear of being ruined : It is a mighty pretty thing to put myself to the expence of near a thousand crowns in dinners and suppers, and all for to have the honour of keeping a summer-house for M. and Madame de Chaulnes, Madame de Rohan, M. de Lavardin, and half Brittany ; who, without knowing any thing of me, will, to be in the fashion, honour me with their company too. Well, we shall see how it will turn out. I shall only be vexed at leaving M. d'Harrouis and this house, before I have half finished my business. But, my dear child, the greatest inclination I have at present is, to be a little religious. I plague La Mousse about it every day : I belong neither to God or devil : I am quite weary of such a situation ; though, between you and me, I

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look upon it as the most natural one in the world : I am not the devil's, because I fear God, and have at the bottom a principle of religion ; then, on the other hand, I am not properly God's, because His law appears hard and irksome to me, and that I cannot bring myself to acts of self-denial ; so that all together I am one of those they call lukewarm Christians, the great number of which does not in the least surprise me, for I perfectly well understand their sentiments, and the reasons they are biassed by. However, we are told, that this is a state highly disagreeable to God ; if so, we must get out of it ; but here lies the difficulty. But was ever any thing so mad as I am, to be thus eternally pestering you with my rhapsodies ? My dear child, *I ask pardon*, as they say here : But I must chat with you, it is what I am fond of ; but be sure not to return me an answer, only let me hear of your health, with a little spice of your sentiments, to let me see whether you are quite easy, and how you like Grignan, that is all. Love me : though we have turned that word into ridicule, yet it is natural, it is good.

LETTER LXIV

TO THE SAME

The Rocks, Sunday 14 June, 1671.

I EXPECTED to have received two Letters from you last Friday, and whence comes it that I had not one ? Ah ! my dear child, whatever may be the occasion of this delay, it is impossible to

express the anxiety it has given me. I have not been able to sleep : I sent twice back again to Vitre, in order to amuse myself with hopes, but in vain. I now plainly perceive, that my peace depends wholly upon the pleasure of hearing from you. Here am I insensibly falling into all the doatage of Chesieres, I now feel his pains of it are like mine ; I now know what he must have felt in not having had that Letter of the 27th ; one cannot be happy if like him ; God preserve me from being in his condition ; but, especially, my dear child, do you preserve me from it. Farewell, I am out of humour, and am very bad company : When I receive another Letter from you, I shall find my tongue again. At going to bed, our thoughts are of a dark grey, as M. de la R. F. says, but in the night, they become quite black : I know but too well what he means.

LETTER LXV

TO THE SAME

The Rocks, Sunday 21 June, 1671.

NOW, my dear child, I once more breathe at my ease. I have supped like Monsieur de la Souche¹ ; my heart is freed from a load that would not suffer me to rest a moment : I have been two posts without receiving a letter from you, and I was in such pain about your health, that I was reduced almost to wishing that you had wrote to every body

¹ See Moliere's School for Women (l'Ecole des Femmes). Act 2. Sc. 7.

besides myself. I could have better borne to have been a little behind-hand in your remembrance, than to undergo the dreadful uncertainty I was in about your health. But, my God ! how do I repent communicating all my uneasinesses to you, I know they will give you pain when they are over with me : This is the misfortune of being at such a distance : Alas ! it is not the only one.

You tell me surprising stories of your ceremonies on *Corpus Christi* day, they are so monstrously prophane, that I am surprised how your good Archbishop¹ will suffer them. It is true indeed, he is an Italian, and this fashion comes from his country. And so, my dear creature, you still continue handsome ; what ! you are not pale, thin, cast down, like the Princess Olympia ! Alas ! I am too happy ; for God's sake, take amusements, and do every thing in your power to preserve yourself : We have had incessant rains here, and, instead of saying after rain comes sunshine, we say, after rain comes wet weather. Our workmen are all dispersed ; and, instead of directing your Letter to me at the root of a tree, you might have directed it to the chimney corner. We have had a great deal of business to do since my coming here : We have not yet determined whether we shall fly the states, or whether we shall face them. One thing certain, is, that we are very far from forgetting you ; we talk of you. I hear there are certain excesses which require correction, both in regard to good breeding and policy. I remember still how one should live to avoid being irksome to others : I make use of my old lessons : We read a

¹ Cardinal Grimaldi.

great deal here : La Mousse has desired that we may read Tasso together ; I understand that author tolerably well, as being perfectly mistress of Italian ; it is an amusement to me. La Mousse's Latin and good sense together, render him an apt scholar, and my practice, and the good masters I have had, make me a good mistress. My son is always reading some *Bagatelle* or other ; Comedies, which he repeats like Moliere himself, verses, romances, histories, &c. in short, he is a very entertaining companion, has wit, and a tolerable good understanding, and has found the way to delude us in such a manner, that we cannot take to any serious reading as we at first intended ; when he has left us, we shall begin again with some of Nicole's moral pieces. One must endeavour to pass life as agreeably as possible, and how is there any doing that at a hundred thousand miles distance from you ? You observe very justly, that one may see and speak to one another through a thick crape. You know the Rocks, and your imagination can easily direct you to where I am. As for me, I do not know how to manage in this respect. I have formed to myself a Provence of my own, an house at Aix, perhaps finer than your's really is, and there I find you. I see Grignan too, but you have no trees there, which vexes me, for I cannot see whereabouts you walk : I am afraid the wind should carry you off your terrass. Oh ! did I but think some sudden puff would transport you hither, I would always keep my windows open to receive you. God knows, I am carrying this folly of mine to a great length. But to return ; I think the castle of Grignan a very fine one, it has a great

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deal of the ancient Adhemars about it. I am enchanted to find how much our good Abbe loves you, his heart seems as warm towards you, as if I had fashioned it with my own hands : For this very reason do I almost adore him. It is a comical thing of your little girl, that, finding she durst not aspire to the perfection of her mother's nose ; for that reason she would not but I shall say no more : however, she has taken the third way, and thought proper to have a little flat nose.¹ My dear, are you not angry with her for it ? but don't let that fancy trouble you at present. Look in your glass, that is all you have to do now, in order to finish happily what you have so well begun.

LETTER LXVI

TO THE SAME

The Rocks, Wednesday 24 June, 1671.

From my fire-side.

WELL ! I will say no more to you about the weather. I shall grow as tiresome as it, if I don't finish upon that head ; so

*Qu'il soit beau qu'il soit laid ; je n'en veux plus rien dire
J'en ai fait vœu, &c.*

Be it foul, or be it fair ;
I'll say no more on't, I declare.

¹ That is, much the same kind of nose as Mad. de Sevigne's.

I have not had a Letter from you this week ; but that has given me no uneasiness, as you told me in your last you should not write. However, I expect one from Grignan with impatience. But for last week, as I was not prepared for it, I own to you, the mistake that was the occasion of detaining my Letters, gave me a most violent inquietude. I have been very troublesome to poor d'Hacqueville on that head, and to you too, my dear ; I am heartily sorry for it, and wish it undone ; but I am of so open a disposition, that if my heart is pressed, I cannot help complaining to those I love ; they must overlook and forgive these foibles in me : for as Mad. de la Fayette said one day, have I laid a wager to be perfect ? No, surely, I am certain if I had laid any such, I should have lost my money. I have had Monsieur de Coetquen here twice within these three days ; he was going to lett some lands upon lease at about three leagues from hence, and has laid out 100 pistoles in his journey, to raise the value of them about 50 franks. He inquired much after you and M. de Grignan, whom he took occasion to mention in the prettiest manner that could be, in speaking of genteel and well-bred people. Pray let me know in your next, whether he is still worthy of being placed in the first rank of well-bred people. We cannot but admire your procession ; I do not think it has its equal in France.¹ My walks are extremely fine ; I sometimes wish you had them with you, for the use of the inhabitants of your great castle. My son is here still, and does

¹ The procession that is made at Aix, on Corpus Christi Day, is the most extravagant and ridiculous thing that ever was seen.

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not seem at all weary of his situation : I have several things to say to you about him, but shall reserve them for another opportunity. We have had a set of nasty *Bohemians* ¹ here, that were enough to make one sick, *and they danced, by my faith, Madam, look you, no offence to your Ladyship's honour, and with all respect be it spoken, no more than so many blind kittens.* This is what one of their own women told me, who was angry with one half of her company. Pomenars may now shave at least one half his face, for he is clear of his rape affair ; nothing is now depending but that of the false money, which he makes himself very easy about. What shall I say to you next, my dear ? There are very few things that one can discourse freely upon at three hundred leagues distance. I find a conversation in my Mall very necessary to me : It is a delightful place for talking in, when one has a heart in the same situation as mine. I shall say nothing to you about the fondness I have for you ; it is a subject that will grow tiresome to you. Farewell then, my dearest creature.

¹ A set of people like our Gypsies, that travel up and down the countries in France, and get their living by dancing, shewing postures, and telling of fortunes ; but chiefly by stealing every thing they can lay their hands on.

LETTER LXVII

TO THE SAME

The Rocks, Sunday 28 June, 1671.

YOU have amply made up my past losses to me : I have received two of your Letters, which have filled me with transports of joy. The pleasure I take in reading them is beyond all imagination. If I have in any way improved your stile, it was not done in the thoughts that I was working for the other's pleasures, and not my own. But Providence, who has seen fit to separate us so often, and at such immense distances, has comforted me a little for it in your correspondence, and still more in the satisfaction you express in your situation, and the beauty of your castle : you represent it to me with an air of grandeur and magnificence that enchants me. I have formerly seen a relation of this kind by the first Madam de Grignan ; but I little thought that time that all these beauties were one day to call you mistress : I am very much obliged to you for having given me so particular account of it. If I could have been tired with reading your Letters, it would not only have betrayed a very bad taste in me, but I must likewise have had very little love or friendship for you. Divest yourself of the dislike you have taken to details ; I have already told you several times, that they are as dear to us from those we love, as they are tedious and disagreeable from others. If we are tired with them, it is from the thorough indifference we have for those they come

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from. Admitting this observation to be true, I leave you to judge how yours stand with me. Upon my word, it is a pleasing thing to be truly the great lady, as you are at present. I think I can perfectly well comprehend what Monsieur de Grignan felt in seeing you so much admire his castle : had you appeared quite insensible, or even indifferent on the occasion, it must have given him a chagrin, that may easily be conceived, and I share heartily in the pleasure he had in seeing you pleased. There are hearts which have such a sympathy for each other in certain things, that they judge by themselves what the others feel. You do not speak often enough of Vardes¹ to me, nor of poor Corbinelli. Has it not been very agreeable to you to be able to speak their language ? How goes on Vardes's passion for the fair T . . . ? Tell me whether he is quite in despair at the infinite length of his banishment, or whether his philosophy, and a little *Misanthropy* together, can support his heart against these strokes of love and fortune ? The books you read are very well chosen. Petrarch must certainly give you a good deal of pleasure, especially with the notes you have. Those of Mademoiselle de Scuderi on some of his sonnets rendered them very agreeable to read. As for Tacitus, you know how I was charmed with it, when we were reading it together, here ; and how often I used to interrupt you, to make you observe the periods, where I thought the

¹ The Marquis de Vardes was banished to Provence in 1665, for having been concerned in some court intrigues, and remained in exile till the year 1682. He was a person of a most amiable character.

harmony particularly striking ; but if you stop half way I shall scold you : It will be doing great injustice to the dignity of the subject, and I shall say to you, as a certain prelate did to the Queen-Mother, *This is history, you know what stories are already.* A backwardness, in this respect, is only pardonable in Romances, which I know you do not like. We read Tasso with great pleasure, and I am a pretty good proficient in it, from the excellent masters I have had. My son makes La Mousse read Cleopatra,¹ and I listen to him, whether I will or no, and with some pleasure too. My son is going to Lorraine ; we shall be very dull in his absence. You know how it vexes me to see an agreeable party going away, and how transported I am when I see a chain of coaches driving off, that have wearied me to death for a whole day : upon which you know we made this just definition, that a bad company is more desirable than a good one. I remember all the odd things we used to say when you was here, and all you said, and all you did : this remembrance never leaves me ; and then again, on a sudden, I think where you are ; my imagination represents to me an immense space, and a great distance ; on a sudden your castle bounds the prospect ; then I am displeased at the walls that enclose your Mall. Ours is surprisingly beautiful, and the young nursery is delightful. I take the greatest pleasure in rearing their little heads to the clouds, and frequently without the least consideration of my own interest, cut down large trees, because their shades incommode my young ones.

¹ A famous Romance of La Calprenede's,

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My son looks upon this way of going on with an evil eye, but I will not allow him to make any application. Pilois¹ continues to be a very great favourite with me, and I prefer his conversation to many who have the title of Knight in the parliament of Rennes. I am grown rather more negligent than you : for the other day I let a coach full of the Fouesnelle family go home through a horrible rain, for want of pressing them with a good grace to stay ; but I never could get the proper terms out of my own lips. It was not the two young women, but the mother and an old body from Rennes, and the two sons. Mademoiselle du Plessis is exactly the same as you represented her, and if possible more impertinent. What she says and does every day to keep me from being jealous, is perfectly original, and I am horribly vexed, sometimes, that I have no body to laugh at it with me. Her sister-in-law is very pretty, and well-behaved. I think you are very happy in having Mad. de Simiane² with you ; she is possessed of a fund of understanding that will relieve you from all kind of restraint, that is a great matter. You will have a most agreeable companion in her. Since she has been so kind to remember me, pray make my compliments to her in return, and likewise to our dear Coadjutor : we do not write to one another now, we can assign no reason for it. I fancy we are at too great a distance, but I admire the dispatch of the post. The comparison

¹ The Gardener.

² Magdalen Hai-du-Chatelet, wife to Charles Louis, Marquis of Simiane ; she was afterwards mother-in-law to Paulina de Grignan.

of Chili enchanted me, and I was no less pleased to find that my apartment is already marked out : I wish for nothing so much as to occupy it, which will be next year, if please God ; the hopes of this gives me a joy that you may in part conceive by that you will have yourself in receiving me. I am surprised at *Catau* ; I believe she is married, but her conduct has been very scandalous and shocking. I can less forgive her intending to kill her child, as it was her husband's, than if it had been by another : she must be very bad at the bottom. Her husband, as they tell me from Paris, is one *Droguet*, that you once saw footman with Chesieres. Love has little to do, I think, to amuse himself with such sort of people ; I would have him confine his power and its effects to the select few, which is now dispensed in too general a manner. If you take upon you to blush for all your female neighbours, and have your imagination as lively as it was with regard to B you will always leave company as handsome as an angel. You want me to load my conscience with the story of this woman ; I will comply with your desire, but upon this condition, that I am not to answer for the truth of it ; on the contrary, I am rather inclined to believe it false. I am never fond of giving into evil reports ; in a word, I give up my agreement. It was reported, then, that M***** had been a little beforehand with his affairs, which made him in such a hurry to get her married. The grand point was to make as good a labour as ever was, pass off for a miscarriage ; and a fine healthy child, for a dead abortion. This trial of skill cost an infinite deal of pains to those concerned in it,

and might serve for subject of a romance. I know the whole affair, but there would be no end of telling it. Here is enough, however, to make you blush in talking of a miscarriage at five months. The child died very luckily. But now I return to you, that is, to the divine fountain of Vaucluse ! What beauty ! Well might Petrarch make such frequent mention of it ! But think of my seeing all these wonders ! I, who have such a veneration for antiquities. I shall certainly be transported with them, and the other glories of Grignan. The Abbe will find employment enough there : after the Doric orders, and splendid titles of your house, nothing is wanting but that order you are going to put it into ; for, let me tell you, without something substantial at the bottom, all the outside and parade you can make will be but bitterness and anxiety. I have great compassion on those who ruin themselves ; it is the only affliction in life that is felt always alike, and which is increased, instead of being lessen'd, by time. I have frequent conversations on this subject with a certain friend of ours. If he has a mind to benefit by those we have had together, he has a good stock by him, and so little tedious that he need not forget them. I am very glad that you are to have a couple of your brothers-in-law with you this autumn. I think you have laid out your journey very well. One can travel a great way without being fatigued, provided one has something to amuse one by the way, and do not lose courage. The return of fine weather has brought me back all my workmen again, in which I take great delight. When I have company, I work at that fine altar-piece

you saw me drawing when you was at Paris ; when I am by myself, I read, write, or am with the Abbe in his closet upon business : I wish him with you sometimes, but it is for two or three days only.

I consent to the commerce of wit which you propose. The other day I made a maxim off-hand without once thinking of it ; after I had done, I liked it so well that I fancied I had remembered it out of M. de la R. F. ; pray tell me whether it is so or not, for in that case my memory is more to be praised than my wit. I said, with all the ease in the world, that *ingratitude begets reproach, as acknowledgment does new favours*. Pray what is this ? have I read it ? did I dream it ? is it my own ? nothing can be truer than the thing itself, nor than that I am totally ignorant how I came by it. I found it ready disposed in my brain, and it run of itself off the end of my tongue. As for that sentence *bella cosa far niente*, you will not think it so dull, when I tell you it is intended for your brother : remember last winter's disaster. Farewell, my dearest child, take care of yourself, continue handsome, dress yourself, amuse yourself, and take the air frequently. I have just been writing to Vivonne,¹ about a captain of a troop of *Bohemians*, whose confinement I have begged of him to make as easy as possible, without detriment to the King's service. You must know there was among the troop of *Bohemians* that I was mentioning to you the other day,² a young girl who danced extremely well, and put me very much in mind of your manner : I took a liking to her ; she

¹ General of the galleys.

² See the Letter of the 24th of June preceding.

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begged of me to write to Provence in favour of her grandfather, *who was at Marseilles* : Where is he, said I ? *He is at Marseilles*, said she, with as much composure and unconcern as if she had said *he is at Vincennes*. He was a man of singular merit, it seems, in his way¹ ; in short, I promised her to write about him, I immediately thought of Vivonne : Here is my Letter, if you are not upon a footing together for me to be merry with him, you may burn it ; but if you are pretty well with the great bundle, and that my Letter will save you one, seal it, and send it to him. I could not refuse this request to the tone of the poor girl, and the best danced minuet that I have seen since those of Mademoiselle de Sevigne ; she had just your air, was about your size, has very good teeth, and fine eyes. Here is a Letter of such a length that I can easily forgive your reading it thro'. Monsieur de Grignan cannot conceive how one can possibly read Letters of such a length : but in good earnest can you read them in a day's time ?

LETTER LXVIII

TO THE SAME

The Rocks, Wednesday 1st of July, 1671.

AT length the month of June has made its exit ! I am really surprised at it, for I thought it never would have seen an end. Do you not remem-

¹ And had been condemned to the galleys, for having distinguished himself rather too much in his Bohemian faculty.

ber one September that you thought had no inclination to give way to October ? Well, this month has gone on just in the same way ; but now I think it is finished : Yes, I am sure it is.

Fouesnel is a delightful place, my son and I went there yesterday, in a coach and six, nothing can be prettier travelling, we seemed to fly : We made some little songs as we went along, which I here send you. The esteem we have for your prose does not hinder us from making you partaker of our verse. Madame de la Fayette is very much pleased with the Letter you wrote her. Well, my dear, it is all over, your brother is going to leave us ; La Mousse and I shall now apply ourselves entirely to the reading good books. Tasso diverts us much at present, and we have amused ourselves with all the trifles we could lay our hands on hitherto, in compliance with my son, who is then in his kingdom. I shall now take long walks *tete a tete*, by myself, as Tonquedec said. Do you imagine I think of you ? But I have my *little friend* here that I love tenderly too. Well, certainly there is nothing so charming as a picture, when well done : Say what you will, that of yours does you a great deal of justice. Your Letters from Grignan are my support and comfort under all my vexations : I wait for them with impatience ; but to say the truth, those I write are of an insufferable length, I am resolved this shall be more reasonable. It is not fair to judge of you by myself ; it is too rash, you have not so much time upon your hands as I have.

In came Mademoiselle du Plessis a while ago, and smacks me that kiss of hers that you know, and

presses me to shew her that part of your letter to me wherein you make mention of her. My son had the insolence to tell her, before my face, that you remembered her in a very kind manner ; and turning to me, shew her the place, Madam, says he, that she may be convinced of it. I coloured up as you do when you think of other people's faults ; and was obliged to tell a thousand lies, and protest I had burned your letter. Was ever any thing so horribly malicious ? I have received a very complaisant and civil letter from Guitaut, he tells me he has discovered a thousand good qualities in me, that he had not perceived before, and I, not to answer in a foolish manner that I was afraid I should destroy his good opinion of me, replied roundly, that I hoped the longer he knew me, the better he would like me. I answer all the extravagancies that are said to me, in this manner, rather than make use of the commonplace replies that you and I have so often laughed at.

I am persuaded that you will meet with great assistance in Madame de Simiane ; we should lay aside all form and ceremony with such people as soon as possible, and make them a party in our pleasures and whims, otherwise we should be quickly dead, and it would be dying a villainous death too. I have declared I will finish this letter, and am resolved to do it. I do myself great violence, however, in quitting you thus soon, my dear ; our correspondence is the sole pleasure of my life : I am persuaded you believe me.

LETTER LXIX

TO THE SAME

The Rocks, Sunday 5 July, 1671.

IT is a great mark of your love, my dear, that you can bear with all the stuff I send you from hence ; you defend Mademoiselle de Croqueoison extremely well ; in return, I assure you, there is not a single word in your letters that is not dear to me. I am afraid to read them, for fear of finishing them, and if it was not for the comfort that I can begin them again, I should spin them out much longer ; but then, on the other hand, my impatience makes me ready to devour them. What should I do if your writing was like d'Hacqueville's, would the greatness of my love help me to decypher it ? really I am afraid not ; however I have heard stories of that kind. In short, I greatly esteem d'Hacqueville, and yet I cannot accustom myself to his writing ; I never know what he writes to me in his letters, I hunt out word by word, I puzzle myself with guessing at them, I spell one after another, and at last when I can make neither head nor tail of it, away I fling the letter in a passion. But I tell you this as a secret, for I would not have him know that his letters give me all this trouble. He thinks, poor man, his hand is like print. My son set out yesterday, greatly concerned at parting with us. I endeavoured to inspire him with every good, just, and noble sentiment that I was mistress of, and to confirm all the good qualities I had remarked in him ; he

LETTERS OF THE

entered into what I said with all imaginable sweetness and marks of approbation. You know the weakness of human nature, and so I shall leave him in the hands of Providence, reserving this comfort of having nothing to reproach myself with in regard to him : As he has a fund of wit and humour, we shall necessarily find ourselves at a loss for him in his absence. We are going to begin a moral treatise of Nicole's. If I was at Paris I would send you that book, I am sure you would like it greatly. We go on with Tasso, and with pleasure ; I am almost afraid to tell you that I am returned to Cleopatra, and by good fortune, the short memory I have makes it still pleasing to me : I have a horrid taste, you 'll say ; but you know I cannot bear those prudish airs which are not natural to me ; and as I am not yet arrived at such a time of life as forbids the reading such works, I suffer myself to be amused with them under the pretence that my son brought me into it. He used to read us some chapters too out of Rabelais, which were enough to make one die with laughing ; and he likewise seemed to take a good deal of pleasure in sitting and talking with me, and if he is to be believed, he will remember what I have said to him : I know him well, and can often discern good sentiments thro' all the flightiness of his conversation. If he is dismissed this autumn, we shall have him again. I am very much perplexed about the states, my first intention was to avoid them, and save myself the expence. But you must know that while Monsieur de Chaulnes is making the circuit of Provence, his wife intends to remain at Vitre, where she is expected in ten or

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twelve days, which will be a fortnight before M. de Chaulnes arrives, and she has begged of me not to set out till she has seen me. There is no getting off this without breaking with them at once. Indeed not to be plagued with them here, I may go to Vitre, but then I can't bear the thoughts of passing a whole month in such hurry and noise. When I am not in Paris I would be no where but in the country. But I declare to you I have not as yet determined upon any thing ; let me have your advice, and tell me what you do with *Catau* ; is she married ? If so, she may make a good nurse ; only I am afraid, after her late fine machinations,¹ her blood may rather be over-heated. I desire you will temper yours, my dear, with good wholesome soups as you did last year.

I have mentioned Launaye to you ; she was the other day bedaubed like a twelfth day taper, we thought she looked like the second edition of a sorry romance, or like the romance of the rose exactly. Mademoiselle du Plessis is always at my elbow, when I read the soft things you say for her, I am as red as fire. The other day La Biglesse played the *Tartuffe* to the life. Being at table, she happened to tell a little lie about something, which I took notice of, and told her of it ; she cast her eyes to the ground, and with a very demure air, " Yes, indeed, Madam, said she, I am the greatest liar in the world, I am very much obliged to you for telling me of it." We all burst out a laughing, for it was exactly the tone of *Tartuffe*. "*Yes, brother, I am a wretch, a vessel of iniquity.*" She attempts

¹ See the letter of the 28th of June.

LETTERS OF THE

sometimes to be sententious, and give herself airs of understanding, which sits still worse upon her than her own natural way. There ! I think you know every thing about the Rocks. I wish I could describe the cries and sobs of *Jaquine and Turquefine*,¹ when they saw your brother get on horseback, it was such a scene ! As for me, tho' I was ready to weep at parting with my poor boy, yet upon seeing their out of the way grimaces and contorsions, I could not for the life of me forbear bursting out a laughing, and every one else with me :

*Mais les voyant ainsi
Je me suis mise à rire, et tout le monde aussi.*

I fancy you meet with no great diversion in the news you get from Paris, for there is none stirring there : What I have from thence tires me to death, they have told me nothing for this month past, but that the King was to be the tenth of the month at St. Germain. They are reduced to send me the meekest stuff imaginable to amuse me ; among the rest, that a young girl dropped her bundle in a chaise, that brought her from the water-side to the Fauxbourg, which the porters took for a little dog : For my part, I had rather by half read Cleopatra, and the wonderful feats of the mighty sword of the invincible Artaban. Next winter, when I am out of my pain about your lying-in, I shall endeavour to divert you better than they divert me here : God knows, my heart, what kind of comparisons I make between their letters and those I receive from Provence.

¹ Two servant girls at the Rocks.

TO MONSIEUR DE GRIGNAN

Come hither ! son-in-law of mine. So, you are resolved to send my daughter back to me by the first coach ; you are displeased with her, and quite angry that she should so admire your castle, and think that she takes too great a liberty in pretending to reside there and command in every thing. As you say that you hate every thing that is *hateable*, you certainly cannot bear her : I enter into all your displeasures, you could not have addressed yourself to any one who feels the whole force of them better than myself. But do you know, after what you have said, that you make me tremble to hear you talk of wishing me at Grignan, and I am quite inconsolable for that reason, for there is nothing in futurity so dear to me as the hopes of seeing you there ; and for all what I say, I am persuaded that you will be very glad of it too, and that you love me : it is impossible it should be otherwise, I love you so well that the same sentiments must necessarily pass from me to you, and from you to me. I recommend the care of my daughter's health to you, above all earthly things ; watch over it, be absolute master in all that regards it, do not behave as you did at the bridge of Avignon ; keep your authority in this one point, and in every thing else, leave her to her own way, she is more skilful than you. Ah how I pity you for having no more of her letters ! you was much happier a year ago ; would to God you had that pleasure again, and I had the mortification of seeing and embracing her ! adieu, my dearest Count,

LETTERS OF THE

though I believe you are as much beloved as any man in the world, yet I do not think that any of your step-mothers¹ ever loved you so well as I do.

LETTER LXX

TO THE SAME

The Rocks, Wednesday 8 July, 1671.

I WANT much to know how you are after your bleeding : I have a notion that out of respect they did not make the orifice sufficiently large, and that your blood came only drop by drop, so that it was neither so well cooled nor so properly purified as it ought to have been, and consequently was not of that service to you as was intended ; this may be my mistake, I wish it may be so ; but one must have much less bile in their composition than I have, to imagine nothing but what is agreeable ; be that as it will, I assure you that your health is infinitely dear to me ; and therefore, if you have too much writing upon your hands, I desire you would write to me less frequently : can I, after this, give you a greater proof of my concern for your health ? Madame de la Troche in a letter I had from her a few days ago, tells me, that if *Catau's* fine intentions during her being with child, had not greatly altered her temper of mind and body, she would make a most excellent nurse : I thought it odd enough that we should both have hit upon the same thought ; for, if you remember, I was mentioning the very

¹ Madame de Sevigne was the third.

same thing to you. Our chapel goes on very fast : it serves for occupation to the Abbe, and matter of amusement to me. But my poor park is destitute of life and soul, that is of workmen, on account of the hay-making. Was you not greatly concerned for the death of M. de Montluet,¹ and for his poor wife ; there is something very shocking in a man's falling from his horse, and being dashed to pieces upon the spot. Madame de la Fayette sends me word that she thinks herself obliged to write to you in my absence, which she intends to do frequently. I thought it very obliging in her, but since I find you answer her letters, I look upon myself as no longer under any obligation to her : this is a paradox, can you solve it ? But methinks I wrong you in doubting your skill in tracing out hidden things ; I fancy I am speaking to myself. I was deeply affected even at this distance with the service performed for the soul of MADAME.² I thought on the emotion you felt from it, and what a disorder it threw you into : I remember too in what a strange manner you passed the whole summer confined to your room, how the heats used to make you faint, and increased your low-spiritedness. I know not what brings all these thoughts into my head, they do me good, and they do me hurt. I think of every thing, because my thoughts are continually employed on you, and pass much more of my time at Grignan than I do at the Rocks. I hope you

¹ Monsieur de Montluet fell dead from his horse as he was reading a letter from his Mistress. He was of the Bullion family.

² The Princess Henrietta-Anne of England, who died at St. Cloud, the 29th of June, 1670.

put no constraint upon yourself on account of the quantity of company you are obliged to see. One should make all these kind of things quite easy to one, or else it would be worse than death ; I have so perfectly persuaded Madam du Plessis that the genteel way at Court is to be quite free and easy, that I indulge myself with an hour or two of Italian with La Mousse, notwithstanding her being present. She seems quite happy with this freedom, and so am I too I promise you. Could you be cruel enough to leave Germanicus¹ in the midst of all his conquests, and amongst the monsters of Germany, without lending him an hand to help him out : at least you might have conducted him to the feast where he was poisoned by Piso and his wife. I think he seems rather too prudent and politick ; and to be in too much fear of Tiberius. I see many heroes, who have not all his prudence, and whose great successes give a sanction to rashness. My son, as I told you, left me in the very midst of Cleopatra ; and I have finished it since he has been gone : But I desire you will let this piece of folly of mine be a secret. I have finished my books, and you are beginning yours ; this would furnish us with excellent matter for conversation were we together. Ah, my dear ! what a pity it is we cannot be so at times, by help of some magic art, at least till next spring ! Here am I with my three priests, who each of them play their parts admirably well, and, at mass excepted, I am never absent from them. I walk very much ; the weather is now very fine and warm ; we do not feel the least inconvenience from the heat

¹ In Tacitus.

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in this house : when the sun comes into my room I leave it, and return to the wood, where I meet with a delightful freshness. Let me know how it is with you in this respect at your castle.

You know what a favourite I am with Brancas, and yet it is above three months since I have heard from him : this does not seem very consistent, but however he is not consistent himself.¹

¹ On account of his remarkable absence of mind.

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